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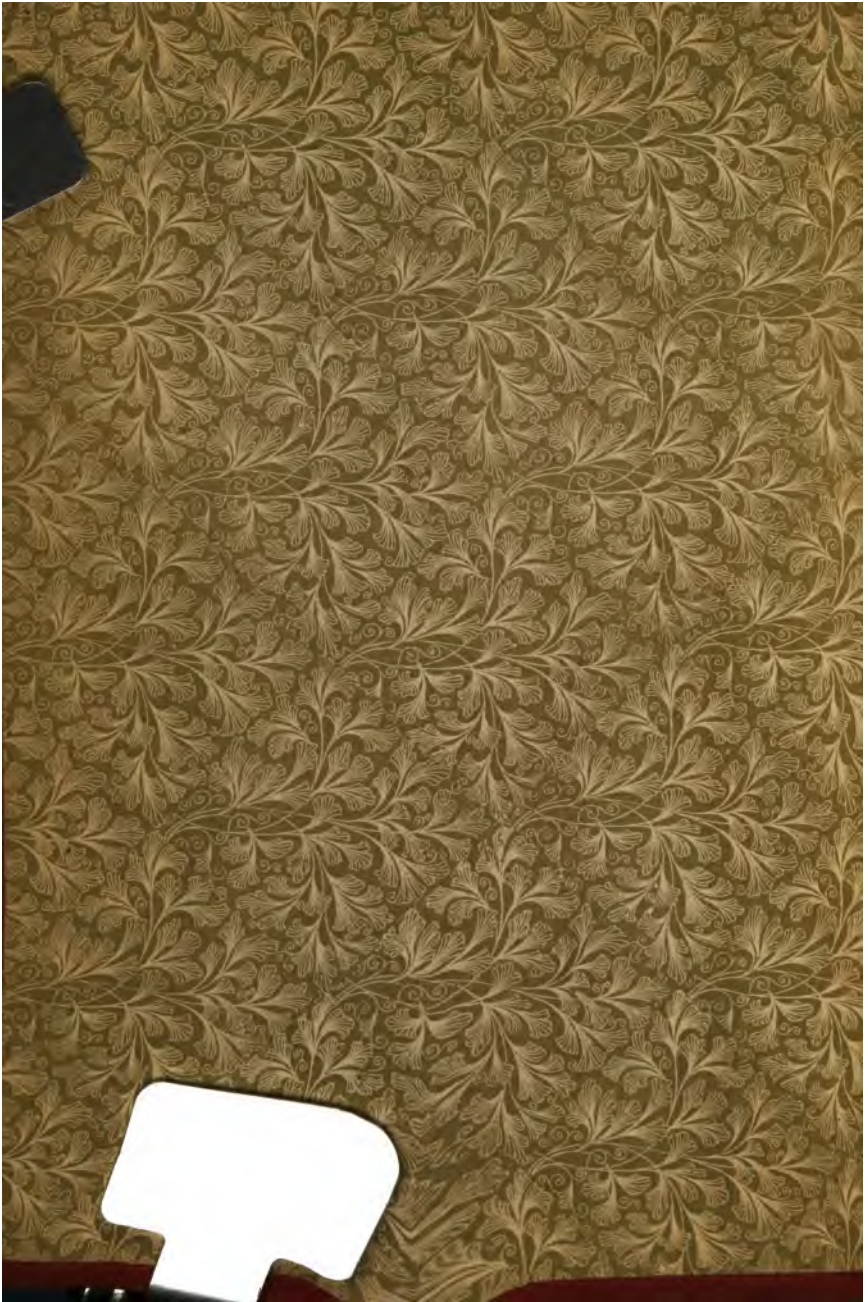
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# LIONEL FRANKLIN'S VICTORY

WHATSOEVER  
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MAN SOWETH  
THAT  
SHALL HE ALSO  
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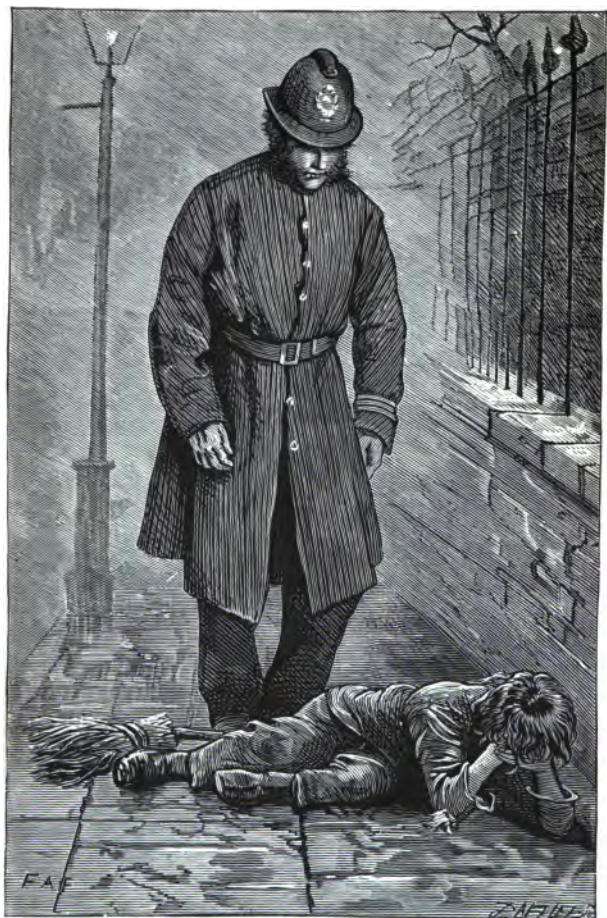
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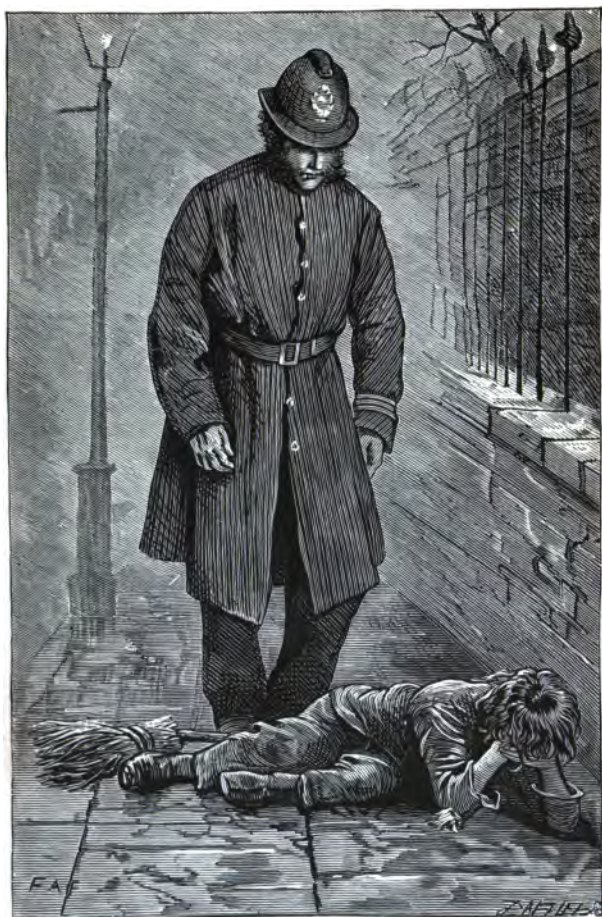
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Page 11.

# LIONEL FRANKLIN'S VICTORY

BY  
E. V. R.

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A LONELY LAD.

Page 11.

# LIONEL FRANKLIN'S VICTORY.

A TALE.

BY

E. VAN SOMMER.

---

"O we will bear and we will do  
Whatever must be done,  
Till for the cause of right and truth  
The victory is won."  

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NEW YORK:  
National Temperance Society and Publication House,  
58 READE STREET.

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1880.

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## Preface.

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THE Committee of the UNITED KINGDOM BAND OF HOPE UNION having offered prizes of One Hundred Pounds, and Fifty Pounds respectively, for the two best tales illustrative of Temperance in its relation to the young, the present tale, "Lionel Franklin's Victory," was selected from one hundred and sixteen MSS. as that entitled to the second prize. The first tale, entitled "Sought and Saved," was written by Miss M. A. Paull, and has already been published. The adjudicators also recommended, as possessing exceptional merit, two other MSS. for publication. These have been purchased by the Committee, and will be published in due course.

Appended is the report of the adjudicators respecting the prize tales:—

WQR 19 FEB '36

We, the adjudicators appointed by the Committee of the UNITED KINGDOM BAND OF HOPE UNION to examine the MSS. submitted in reply to an advertisement issued by the Committee, offering a prize of One Hundred Pounds for the best, and a prize of Fifty Pounds for the second best Temperance Tale illustrative of and adapted to promote total abstinence amongst the young, hereby declare that we have selected the tale with the motto, "A little child shall lead them," by Miss M. A. Paull, as that entitled to the first prize; and the tale with the motto, "Qui patitur vincit," by Miss E. Van Sommer, as that entitled to the second prize.

WILLIAM BARKER, M.A.,  
*Honorary Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty, and  
Vicar of St. Mary, West Cowes.*

H. SINCLAIR PATERSON, M.D.,  
*Minister of Belgrave Presbyterian Church, London.*

J. P. BACON.

UNITED KINGDOM BAND OF HOPE UNION,  
4 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON, E.C.,  
*February 15, 1879.*

*P.S.*—Two prize tales, entitled "Frank Oldfield" and "Tim's Troubles," were also published by the Committee some years since, which have had a very large circulation, and are still on sale.



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# LIONEL FRANKLIN'S VICTORY.

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## CHAPTER I

NOVEMBER FOG.

OMEbody was crying. The busy passers-by knew it; and some turned their heads in the direction from which the sounds came, and some did not. The policeman stationed at the head of the square knew it; but to comfort was beyond the limits of his duty. The blind fusee-seller against the railing knew it; but he was too miserable himself to think of cheering another. So no one heeded the little lad, who, curled up against the low wall of the gardens, was sobbing out the sorrow of his heart.

One, two, three, four, boomed from the clock-tower at Westminster. One, two, three, four, tingled the cheery little time-piece in Policeman B's bright room. Policeman B started at the sound, and jumped up from the floor in such a hurry that he almost over-

threw Dick and Nellie, who were standing triumphant at having really knocked father down. "I must be off, Jenny, or I shall be late," he said, as he gave baby one toss into the air, kissed his bright young wife, and started for the police station. A dismal howl from Dick and Nellie was the last sound he heard as he closed the door, and two very melancholy little faces were pressed against the window-pane to watch father go. Poor little Dick! he never could understand why father always must hurry away just when they were having the very merriest of romps.

Five minutes' brisk walk brought Policeman B to the station, and before the quarter struck, he was again wending his way through mud and fog to his usual afternoon beat in Errelle Square. He relieved the officer there on duty, and took his stand at the head of the gardens.

Policeman B's eyes were of little use to him that afternoon. The gas flared feebly through the thick atmosphere; and as the November day closed in the fog thickened, and a drizzling rain began to fall. However, though his usually keen vision was for a time dimmed, his sharp ears did him good service, and he too became aware that somebody was crying. Thoughts of the happy home and the dear ones he had left there had followed Policeman B out into the wet and the gloom, and his kind heart was soon touched by the pitiful wail that broke upon his ears. For some minutes he peered about in vain, and no

wonder. Down on the wet pavement, squeezed into a corner formed by the projecting pillar of the gate, was a little bundle of clothes, with nothing to show that they had an owner but two muddy boots and the rough top of a curly head that was buried in two black little hands. A well-worn crossing-broom lay a little way across the pavement, and against this Policeman B stumbled. His half-angry exclamation was checked by a smile of recognition.

"Broomy," he said, now perceiving the boy close by,—*"Broomy, my boy, what's up with you this afternoon?"*

There was no answer, no motion. The half-stifled sobs were checked, and to all appearance the boy looked as though he were asleep.

Policeman B knew Broomy well. Many a talk had they had together as the boy stood by his clean-swept crossing, and many a piece of good advice had the kind man given to the lonely lad. He looked down upon him now sadly and pityingly. Broomy was a strange lad, and Policeman B knew how bitter a humiliation he would feel it that he should have been seen crying. He had caught his struggle to repress the sobs, and could guess how unwillingly the boy had let his feelings conquer him; and so he hesitated as to whether he should further disturb him or not. Jenny would give the poor child a cup of tea and a bit of a warm if he could get him to go for it.

"Broomy," he said again, "courage, my boy! You and I are old friends; tell me what is the matter. Here, you will lose your broom if you do not look out."

Broomy's hand clutched his only worldly possession a little more tightly, but otherwise he remained apparently unconscious of the presence of another.

Policeman B could not wait much longer, so he put down his hand on Broomy's collar, and gently raised him to his feet.

"Don't," was all that the boy vouchsafed to say, and dashing the tears from his eyes, grasping his broom, and wresting himself by a sudden twist from the policeman's kind hand, he was off into the darkness.

"Strange lad," said Policeman B, as he turned back to his beat; "I'd have been glad to help him if I could." And all through the long night his thoughts went back regretfully to that solitary little figure all alone in his sorrow, and yet refusing the only sympathy offered him.

"I don't know why I should care," he said, as he told Jenny about it the next day, "but you had only to look at that boy's bright, honest face, and you must love him; but alone in London, I don't know what he may come to."

## CHAPTER II

### BROOMY'S NIGHT-LODGINGS.



ON into the deepening fog and gloom sped Broomy, his feet carrying him swiftly and surely, though he could not see a yard before him. The way was familiar, however, and he crossed streets, turned corners, and made short cuts, in a way that would have been puzzling to any one less well acquainted with London. Suddenly he pulled up, and from a sharp trot dropped into a slow walk. "You silly!" he said half aloud to himself; "why in the wide world did you make such a goose of yourself—crying like a baby, and you knew it all before? A fine fellow you indeed!" He tried to whistle, but the notes quavered and shook, and finally died away; and feeling any attempt to dispel only brought back his sorrow again, he started off once more as fast as his legs could carry him. "It's no use; I'll go to bed," he said; and putting his words into immediate execution, he turned sharp to the left, then to the right, listened for a minute at the top of a narrow passage, then running quickly



down, made one bound, and Broomy was in his bed.

Wonderfully proud was the little lad of his sleeping accommodation; yet it was only the straw-covered bottom of a small cart. But in Broomy's eyes it was grand. First, it was warm: cuddled under the seat, even in winter he could make himself cozy and comfortable. Then it was clean: every week fresh straw was put in. And, lastly, it was cheap: never a halfpenny had Broomy paid for this night-lodgings, and he had now slept here more than two years. Broomy never felt quite sure whether the man to whom it belonged knew of the use to which his property was put at night. Sometimes he fancied he did. Once or twice, when it was very cold, he had found an old mat lying inside; and now and then there was a piece of bread or a potato amongst the straw. They *might* have dropped down by accident, it is true; but somehow he fancied they had not found their way there by chance. He little knew that from the window that opened above the yard two kind eyes looked out every night to see if "the bairn was safe," and a motherly little woman lay down to rest with a thankful heart that one of the many street wanderers should night after night rest safe from sin and crime.

Joe Parker, her husband, knew nothing of this, however; and his wife never told him, as she could not be sure how he might take it. She had never

had a child of her own, and her heart had warmed towards her unknown lodger, who, with his bright face and his honest eyes, came night after night into that little back-yard. Janet never forgot the first night that she saw him. It was long past midnight, and Joe had not come home. Patiently she waited for him, ready to open the door as soon as she should hear his slow, shuffling footstep. A slight noise in the passage, and a shadow thrown across the flag-stone in the clear moonlight, drew her attention to a little boy creeping stealthily past the door. Down into the yard he glided, and, looking cautiously around, jumped into the cart; and, burying his face in his hands, sobbed as though his heart would break. She could just catch his smothered moans, and her own tears soon flowed from sympathy with the forlorn child. Long she watched him, until at last she saw him curl himself under the seat, and knew that sleep was yielding him a truer comfort than any human friend could bring. "God bless thee, laddie!" she said, softly, as she turned from the window to carry, with her own burden, the unknown sorrow of this little stranger to her Father in heaven, and to ask his care for him as well as for herself and Joe.

So Broomy slept, and Janet watched, and unconsciously they helped and influenced each other. The boy became a constant interest to the kind little woman. "God is watching over him," she would say to herself; "and sure he is watching over Joe too. I

have only to wait long enough, and he'll come back again the same kind husband he was in years gone by." And for Broomy, who can tell from how much harm he was kept by his safe night-lodgings? Who can know how often in hours of danger Janet Parker's prayers followed him, and her pleading for him was answered in special protection from the snares that beset him on every side?


So, in spite of fog and rain on this November night, Broomy was sure of a safe resting-place in Joe's cart; and he was soon cozily rolled up under the seat. But Broomy could not sleep. He twisted and turned; tried first one position, and then another. It was no good. He might shut his eyes, but busy thoughts kept his brain wide-awake; so at last he sat up resolutely. Difficulties were before him, and he knew it; it was only a put-off to try and go to sleep and forget them. He would have to face them to-morrow; better do it now. So Broomy screwed up his knees, crossed his arms upon them, rested his chin upon his hands, and mentally looked back into a dark past, and then on into what appeared to him a still darker future.

"Courage!" he said to himself. "I wonder why he said, 'Courage'? 'Tain't cowardly to cry when there's anything to cry about. *He* didn't know, though; nobody knows, and nobody cares. Can't go back there again nohow; 'twas babyish perhaps, but what is a feller to do? I s'pose I must give up the

crossing. I don't want to lose *that*, though," kicking his broom with his foot. "Mother gave it me, and it has brought me in all I ever earned. I'll take it round to Alice. Perhaps she won't die yet; *I* don't see she looks worse. Well, it hasn't come yet. Mother said things would never be so bad I should come to a full stop, if I kept straight ahead. Anyway, crossing-sweeping is over; and the only thing is to look out for something different. I'll go to sleep now." And so he did.

## CHAPTER III

### HIS FIRST FRIEND.

T was still dark, but the air was clear; the fog had drifted away, and the rain-clouds were gone: so early risers were already congratulating themselves upon a fine day.

Broomy's slumbers were suddenly interrupted by a gentle hand touching him upon the shoulder.

"I don't do no harm," he mumbled, half-awake. "Why mayn't a feller sleep in a cart when he can't sleep anywhere else?"

"I dinna want to send ye away, me bairn," said Janet's motherly voice; "I want you to help me a bit. The gudeman's no so well this morning, and I daren't awaken him to pull the cart out. Will ye give it a push behind the while I pull before?"

"No, no, missus," said Broomy, now thoroughly awake, his bright eyes looking, full of sympathy, into her pale, anxious face. "You just go back into the house, and leave the cart to me. It's not nigh five yet; I'll have it round at the yard gate as the clock strikes. I have often watched him a-wheeling it, and

know the way 'xactly; so there's nothing to fear. I know," he added, looking up into her face.

And Janet felt that he did know, and, young though he was, that he too knew something of the sorrow brought to our English homes by the curse of our country, the drink; and so she felt she might trust him with her trouble. "He doesn't do it often, —at least, he used not to; but, you see, the money comes in fast-like now, and so—well, you know, he forgets."

Janet tried to put the best side of her poor, weak husband forward; but, in spite of her attempted cheerfulness, two tears gathered in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks, as she thought of the sad contrast between the sunny years of their early married life and the dark and cloudy ones that had followed. Then, feeling the boy's eyes still fixed upon her, full of shy pity, she took his bright face between her hands and pressed a kiss upon his forehead, saying, "And mind you keep clear of the drink, laddie."

"Ay, ay," he said, colouring like a girl; and then turned abruptly to rub up the cart and arrange the straw afresh.

Janet watched him for a minute, and then, telling him to be sure and come in for his breakfast, she turned into her sad home and closed the door.

"It was just like mother," thought Broomy. "I knew something 'ud turn up. Mother used to pray

such a lot, she said she knew I'd always be took care of and things 'ud come."

The cart in Joe's yard was the property of the master of some large grocery and provision store round the corner. Parker's duty was to keep the cart clean, to wheel it round every morning to the door of the warehouse, and to fetch it again at night; also to help during the day in packing and carrying boxes in the store.

Broomy felt no little pride at having this work intrusted to him, and an extra five minutes was spent at the pump washing and smoothing, until, though he had no looking-glass to tell him so, he felt that he looked more tidy than usual; and certainly he did. The cares of last night were laid aside for the time, and his face had assumed its usual merry expression. His curly brown hair was smoothed back from his forehead, and the bright colour in his cheeks, the sunshine in his eyes, and the life and energy in all his movements, made Broomy look his best that dark November morning. From the gas lamp in the street at the head of the court came all the light by which he could see to his charge. There were not many difficulties in the way, however, and by the time the clock struck five Broomy had triumphantly guided the cart through the narrow passage, had managed to escape knocking against the lamp-post, and was standing waiting until the yard gate should open.

"Hilloa, boy! who are you?" exclaimed the porter,



astonished to see so small a form where Joe Parker, six feet in his socks, usually stood.

"Please, sir, Joe can't work to-day, so I brought the cart round."

"He's drunk, you mean. Well, so much the worse for him. We've a lot of work on to-day, and can't afford to be short of hands. If he can't come when he's wanted, he'd better stay away altogether. A pretty fix we shall be in, indeed."

"I can work," said Broomy bluntly.

"You!" said the man, somewhat contemptuously. "What would you do with a package like *that*, I should like to know?"

Broomy looked rather doubtfully at the huge box.

"Anyhow," he said, "they must be packed before they are lifted. There must be something boys can do. I want work terribly: try me for *one* day," he said earnestly.

"Well, turn in," said the man, "and I'll see."

Broomy had to wait patiently for half an hour, when he was looked at and questioned by another man, and then passed on to a third, who finally conducted him to the packing-shed, where he was set to work. He carried one recommendation with him in his bright open face, another in his neatly-mended clothes; but the chief inducement to take on a characterless boy was the great press of work and the failure of several of the ablest hands.

Half an hour was allowed for breakfast at eight

o'clock, and without the least hesitation Broomy found his way round to Mrs. Parker, and was soon knocking at her door. She was his friend now, and he felt she meant what she said, and the thought of breakfast was pleasant after two and a half hours' hard work. Besides, he wanted to tell her of his good fortune. Now that he had got a friend he would treat her as one, and he knew she would be glad to hear. The door was open, and in answer to her "Come in" Broomy stepped inside.

"Well, laddie," she said, "I have been wondering why you did not come; but sit ye down, the tea is still hot upon the hob, and help yourself to the bread and potatoes."

"Mrs. Parker," said Broomy, all haste to pour out his good news, "they have taken me on. I have been packing all the morning, and there will be work for me in the shed all through the week. It is just what I wanted. I could not go back to the crossing, you know, after last night."

"Then you must just thank God for his care over you, bairnie. It was just his own hand that led ye, be sure of that."

Broomy looked up, as much as to say, "Yes, I do know;" but he said nothing, only his thoughts went back to his mother again, it was so like her.

It was a long, long time since Broomy had had such a meal. Hot tea with sugar in it and a spoon to stir it with, bread to any amount off a plate, and

baked potatoes just fresh from the oven, were becoming unknown luxuries to him; and Janet enjoyed watching his hearty appreciation of her good things.

"Thank you," he said, when he had done; "it was good. I will bring the cart round at five if I may."

"Laddie," said Janet, taking both his hands, "I do think God sent you to me just now, for I shouldna ha' known what to do without ye. You must come and tell me all about it when the day's work is done. I've watched and prayed for you many a night, and I can see there is a sad story somewhere; so you must come and tell me, laddie."

Broomy gladly promised that he would, and went out to his work.

Janet sat still for a long time, thinking. For two years she had taken a constant interest in the boy, but no opportunity had ever come to her of speaking to him or learning about him. Now, however, as if by accident, he was brought to her, and a warm love grew up in her heart towards him, and an earnest wish to do all in her power to help him. "He can't be bad," she thought to herself; "and yet why should he come and sleep here night after night, and not in his own home? He must have some one to care for him, or his clothes wouldn't be patched so neat. O bairnie," she said, "gin I could ha' ye to look after, and Joe wouldna mind, I'd take sich care o' ye, and ye'd brighten my sad days wi' your bonnie face; but we mun bide a wee." So Janet turned her wish into

a prayer, and went about her duties, her sad heart quieted.

Meanwhile Broomy was hard at work. He was a quick, enthusiastic boy, and he did all that was given him with an ardour and an interest that soon won words of praise from the head workman in the shed.

By the time the dinner hour came he was pretty well tired out, and while his fellow-workmen turned this way and that, to go to their respective resorts to get their daily meal, Broomy strolled into Oxford Street, and walked leisurely past the gay shops and among the busy passers-by. He had no spare pence in his pocket to buy anything to eat. But Broomy did not grumble; one good meal a day was all he was accustomed to, and that he had had. His face wore a troubled, rather puzzled look as he walked along. He was busy looking into the future and trying to see his way clearly before him. It was rather a failing of Broomy's to be always perplexed about what might be, instead of taking the days as they came.

"It was awfully hot and stuffy," he said; "I wonder how those fellows stand it. Pack, pack all day, and never a breath of fresh air." Broomy stretched himself rather wearily. It was a new thing for him to feel tired. Always out in the open air as he had been from his babyhood, he hardly knew what fatigue was. At his crossing he would sweep as long as he felt inclined; and then, if it were hot or wet, or there were fewer passers-by than usual,

he crept away into the gardens or ran off into the park, and there, under some tree, slept away an hour or two, and then went back to try again. There was no one to say "Do this" or "Do that." Broomy was his own master, and he enjoyed the liberty. Now he had to face the probability of giving up all this and voluntarily placing himself at the direction of another.

"If I go in for it, I must go through with it," he thought. "It's pretty hard, five to five, and two hours out. But then it's sure, seven shillings a week. No penny by penny, always in a lump; and then they'll rise me soon. Mother used to say something about regular work, trade *she* said, but there's no one now to 'prentice me. 'Specs she'd a' liked this better than the crossing, so if they asks me I'll say Yes." So it was settled, and Broomy's face cleared as he walked briskly back to the warehouse, whistling "Rule Britannia."

## CHAPTER IV.

### HIS PAST HISTORY.



THE short November day had closed in, and it was quite dark before Janet heard the slow rumble of the cart, and saw Broomy carefully wheeling back his charge. She opened the door to him.

"Come in, laddie," she said; "it isn't bed-time yet. I would you had somewhere better to sleep. Have you no home?"

Broomy looked up at her with a wistful expression, as though half asking her to inquire no further, and she did not then.

"Come in," she said gently; "I've kept the tea hot."

So he went in and sat down by the cozy little fire, and a longing for things he had lost came creeping over his heart as he watched her quietly moving about. And when he had done, he leant back his head against the chimney-piece, and sat quite still, while Janet was busy in the little back-kitchen washing up and putting tidy, humming a Scotch air gently

to herself the while. That done, she came back again to the fireside, and settling herself in her easy-chair, drew out her knitting, and looking across at Broomy, said,—

“Now, laddie, I think maybe I could help you if I knew it all.”

And Broomy thought she would. He had secretly been hoping she would ask him again; so he drew his stool across the rug, and settling himself at her feet, he told his tale.

“It’s two years ago and more since first I slept round here. I couldn’t stay at home no longer after *she* died. It had been bad enough for a long time, but when I said I’d go, she’d cry, and say for her sake I must stay, and so I kept on; though, to be sure, I was little enough at home. You see, it’s all been different since I was born to what it was before, they tell me. Long, long ago they used to live down in the country; and mother used to tell Alice and me all about the cottage and the country, and all how the roses grew, until it almost seemed as though we’d been there once. Alice says she can remember it a bit, just like a dream; and now she has to lie still all day she thinks it over and over, until it seems real like; and she says, though she won’t never see the country no more, she guesses there’ll be something like it in heaven.

“Father and mother lived there ever so long, both before and after they was married. Father was a



coachman, and mother she was nurse, both in the same family, and they'd always known each other. Mother hadn't no parents, and nobody to look after her, and her missus was just ever so kind to her. She took her when she was only a bit of a girl, and trained her, and taught her everything. Mother nigh broke her heart when she died. They was good to father too; he was steady then, and he rose up from being a stable-boy till he drove the carriage and pair. Then they married when they was old enough, and mother used to tell Alice and me all about the wedding-day, and all they did; and she always kept some of the flowers pressed and put away, 'cause, she said, the missus gave them her herself. They had the front lodge, and Alice used to run out and open the gate, and Miss Mabel would throw her sweeties from the carriage. She gave her her name, and mother says she was uncommon fond of Alice. Then there were two more babies, and they died, both the same week, from the fever, and mother was never strong again after that.

"There was trouble at the big house too. Master Lionel had gone away to sea, and they didn't hear from him not for two months and more; and then news came that he had died on board ship. They had something catching, and lots of them were took off. Mother had had the charge of him since when he was a baby, and she did just grieve after him, they say, almost as much as the missus, only it killed

her. She went off quick like; they kept waiting and waiting to see if she wouldn't get better, and then they took her away to Scotland, where they used to go every year. But it was all no good; she got worse and worse, and the doctor said she must go where it was warm for the winter. So the master wrote down to father to say that they were all going away to France, and that he had let the house, and the horses were to be sent up to London to be sold; and though he was real sorry to part with father, as he was going to give up house he wouldn't want him no longer. So he sent him his wages and ten pound more.

"Mother said it came so sudden-like, they didn't know what to do. Father took it terrible to heart; he seemed to think as though he would never find a place, and just gave up at once; and mother, though she was so weak and ill, had to do everything. Edgley was so out of the way, there was no chance of a place near there; so they sold the furniture, and packed up what little they could, and came up to London. They had neither of them been to London before; and mother always says since the first day she reached the city, life has never been the same; all the sunshine went away, she says.

"She just saw her missus once again. She said she'd like to see her, but she was so wasted and ill, mother could only cry, and hardly say a word. She just thanked her for all her kindness, and the missus

looked so kind, and said she must thank her for all her service and her love, especially towards Master Lionel; and she said she knew she would never see England again, but that when Miss Mabel came back she would be sure to find her out. Then she gave her her picture, and Master Lionel's too; and mother put them with the flowers, and Alice has them still. And then they went away, and mother never heard no more, till one day, as she was wrapping up father's dinner in a piece of paper, she saw among the deaths, 'Evelyn Mabel, wife of Harold L. Raine, Esq. of Edgley;' and she knew it was the same. She had been dead nearly four months then; but we never heard if the others came home again."

Broomy stopped, as though he shrank from the sadder details yet to be related. He had been looking into the fire all the while, watching the flames darting one after another, and then sinking into a warm red glow. Janet was behind, and he had not watched her face, or he would have seen a look of such interest and sympathy that would have shown him familiar names were falling on her ears.

"Laddie," she said, as he paused, "was mother's name Edith Ashton?"

"Yes, before she was married," he said, his whole face lighting up; "father's name is Robert Franklin. Did you know her?"

"I knew and loved her long before you were born,"

she answered ; " but you tell your tale first, and then I must tell you mine."

" It's easier, if you cared for her," he said, and then went on :—

" They went into a lodging first, while father looked for a place. They said it was the wrong time of year, or something. He tramped about from morning to night, and couldn't find anything, and at last, just in despair, he took a place in a mews in the Tottenham Court Road. Mother fretted no end : it wasn't only it was such a come down, but there is such a low set about a mews ; and though she just loved father with her whole heart, and he did her, she knew he weren't strong some ways, and she was afeard he'd go wrong. They took two rooms in Gresse Street, and mother made them ever so bright and pretty. There were curtains all rose-buds, and lined with pink, and everything was clean and bright. But it was all so different to the country ; the things got dirty and dingy so soon, and the flowers died in the window ; and when father did not care for it any more, it was hard for mother to keep up heart and to look after it all.

" So things went on ; and when they'd been there three months, I was born. Then it was worse than ever. Alice was only five, and she couldn't do much, and there was no one to come in and put things straight for mother, or tidy up and keep the place clean, and father began to keep out of the evenings. They say it was all my fault. I was a tiny little

fellow, ever so weak and whiny, and I used just to cry and cry, and no one could quiet me. Mother could hardly get a bit of sleep, and it made father distracted-like, and say he couldn't stand it; and then he used to go out, and that fretted mother worse than my crying. He never could bear the sight of me, they say, and I have never been in his arms all my life long. With mother it was different; she grieved so for the little ones who died, it seemed to give her new life to have a baby to care for again; and she called me Lionel, after the young gentleman that was drowned. But all the time the habit of staying out was growing on father. He had always been so gentle-like to mother, and used to do all the shopping for her to save her from going out in the London streets, because she could not get used to the noise and the crush. But now he seemed to forget, and she had to go alone; and a sad, worn look came into her face which she never had had before.

"Father was so bright in those days, it was harder to lose him then than it would be now. He used to say such funny things, and make all the men laugh, they liked to have him with them; and he was so tall and so handsome, mother was ever so proud of him. I would never have loved him if it had not been for her. She used to tell me all about him when he was a boy, how he climbed the trees, and saved the puppies from being drowned in the mill-stream,

till I forgot he had changed; and so she taught me to care for him.

“But it was long before that that he learned to love the drink. Mother never guessed it for ages. She used to think he was out with the carriage at a party, or gone down into the country for the evening, when he was late. He loved her enough never to come home till he was sober, and so she didn’t think. But one evening she had been out late to fetch some things for breakfast, and as she turned the corner she heard his voice singing. She stepped down the street to listen, for it was long since she had heard him sing; and then as she got nearer she knew it came out of the public-house, and a minute after he came out not nearly himself. Alice told me all this; she was with her, and I was in her arms. She says she will never forget the look that came over her face; it was just as if, then and there, her heart broke in two. She didn’t say one word, but she just turned round and walked straight away home with us, and put us both to bed, and then went down and waited; and when he came in, Alice heard her voice so sweet and bright. She got him his coffee and all he wanted, and was so gentle and tender as though it was only an accident, and never a word or a look to reproach him for his selfishness. But when he had dropped asleep in his chair, she came stealing up to our room, and she put down her dear head upon the pillow by me, and the tears rolled down her cheeks; and she

prayed and she cried, and there was no one to help her. Alice was too frightened to show she was awake, and so she had to bear it all alone. Mother was only young still, and it *did* seem so hard for her.

“The next morning she spoke to him, and told him just what she had seen, and begged him for her sake and ours, and for his own, but just most because it was wrong in God’s sight, wouldn’t he give it up before the habit took hold of him. He listened to her so ashamed of himself, and he kissed her and promised never to take too much again; and he took Alice on his knee (father always loved Alice so), and promised to take her in the park, and give her all sorts of things. He went away to his work, and left mother with a lighter heart; but in a week he was all bad again. He’s weak, father is; he doesn’t like to be a drinking man, but he can’t stand all he must stand if he gives it up; so, as he wouldn’t conquer, he has been conquered. He used always to be making mother promises, and he was always kind and gentle to her and Alice; it was only me he couldn’t bear.

“After mother knew where he spent the evenings, she used to go and fetch him home; and she would always take me in her arms, ’cause Alice was too little a girl to have me to take care of alone. It used often to be cold and windy, and I used to cry; and there we’d stand sometimes an hour, and in

between the laughing and the singing father used to hear me crying, and he would know she was standing waiting. Sometimes it would bring him out, and sometimes the thought of all her love and patience and his selfishness and cruelty would just drive him on to drink more. He used to tell her not to go, but she always went, for she couldn't bear that the neighbours should laugh at him, or that he should come home singing and making a noise. But it wore her out. She got her cough standing at the door of 'the Lion.'

"Alice tells me all this. You see, she can remember father a bit before he changed, I can't; and so she tells me about it. Almost the first thing I can remember was when I was only a little bit of a boy. One day I was standing leaning against the lamp-post, looking down the street, when I saw a man coming along. I hardly knew I was watching him till I saw him knock up against a little girl no bigger than me, and send her clean over into the gutter. He didn't seem to care a bit; and though she cut herself, and called out ever so loud, he never stopped to pick her up; and it seemed to make me feel hot and angry all over, and I felt to hate a man who could be such a coward. And when he got nearer, hardly able to steady himself a bit, I saw it was father, and I felt as though I never could love him again. I just turned round and ran straight into the house, and cried so mother couldn't make it out. And



then when I went to bed, and she held me up to kiss him like she always did, I put down my head on her shoulder and wouldn't. So she carried me away upstairs, and asked me all about it; and I told her I couldn't love him any more, and I didn't believe he loved her or Alice or me a bit, or he wouldn't always be drinking. Her face got all white to hear me say such things, poor mother! but she let me talk, and did not stop me; only, she put me to bed very quietly, and then knelt down and prayed a little short prayer all about father and me. After that she used more than ever to tell me about what he *had been*; and so she taught me to pity him, and to want to help him to get back again to his former self.

"So things went on, and Alice and I began to grow up. All the neighbours got to call me Broomy, because I was for ever a-sweeping. Alice tells me, when I was hardly more than a baby I would get hold of a broom and 'sweep a crossing for father,' as I used to say. Mother used to stand and watch me with a sad smile; for though I didn't know it, I always swept it clean the way he went over to the Lion.

"Of course father couldn't get good wages; he was always taking holidays; so after a time we had to leave the downstairs rooms and move upstairs. Then Alice had to go to work. Mother fretted over that at first; she wanted her to go into a place and be a nurse, as she was; but she was still too young for

that, and father would send her to Maples' to sew carpets, and there she stayed all the while till she got ill.

"Father went on just the same year after year, and he never seemed to see that mother was getting weaker and weaker, and the furniture and everything round us becoming shabby and old. Sometimes he used to say that it was time I should go to work; but she begged so hard that I might go on with my schooling a little longer, he gave in. So I learned more about reading and writing, and so on, than most knows, and mother used to like me to read aloud to her. She used always to take us to church with her, and sometimes, just now and then, father would come too. He never was bad, wasn't father; not reg'lar bad, like some are. He never gave up caring for mother; and when he got the better of himself for a little while, he used to be so gentle and so tender, and would seem as though he would do all he could to make her forget. It seems so horrid drink can make such a difference in a man; and it always conquered in the end, and he got back into the old bad ways again.

"Only once did I ever see him unkind to mother, and that was the first day I slept round here. It was on a Sunday—their wedding-day. Alice had remembered it, and had got some flowers over-night to give them. But when we came down in the morning, father had gone out already; and when Alice gave mother the

flowers, she cried, so we didn't know what to do. As soon as breakfast was done, she put on her things and went out of the door without saying a word; but we knew she had gone to try and get him, so we went away into the bedroom and watched out of the window, Alice and me. Presently they came along together, father looking half ashamed of himself, and mother so pale and weak she could hardly walk. She brought him upstairs, and gave him his coffee, and boiled an egg for him, and then she came in to us. She saw at once we had been crying, and she made us sit down by her, and talked to us quite a long while. She told us she knew she was getting weaker very quickly; her cough was worse now the autumn had come, and she didn't think she could live long, and she wanted us both to promise to take all the care we could of father. 'Alice must make the home bright for him,' she said, 'and Lennie' (mother and Alice always called me that) 'will watch over him out of doors. It may be hard, but I know some day God will lead him back to Himself; so you must both help him, and love him, and pray for him.' We promised her we would, and she knelt down with us then and there, and asked God to help us to keep our promises, and to take care of father.

"After that, we put on our things and went to church. Father was asleep, so we left him, and we three went together. It was the last time mother went. The sermon was all about heaven; mother

liked it so, she used to talk about it when she was ill. Alice and I didn't, because we didn't want mother to go away, though we were glad there was *somewhere* where she could have a bit of rest.

"Father was out again when we reached home, but he came in soon after, bringing the beer for his dinner. Mother had got everything so nice for that day, their wedding-day; and with Alice's flowers on the table it looked so bright, we *might* have been happy. Father was very silent; it made us all feel dull too. We didn't know that he had been drinking again while we were at church; but he must have, or he would not have done what he did do. Dinner was half over before he put out his hand to take the jug of beer. I know we had all been hoping he would do without it for once; and mother did what she had never done before—she stretched out her hand and laid it over his as if to stop him, and she looked up in his face so beseechingly, and said, 'Leave it to-day, Rob; it is our wedding-day,—just for once, dear.'

"I don't think he thought what he was doing: his face got all dark and angry, and he seized the jug and held it up as though he would hit her. I couldn't stand that. My blood all boiled up, and I struck his arm with all my might, and sent the jug flying to the other side of the room. Mother raised her hand to stop me, but it was done in a moment, and then father turned round on me furious. He caught up

the first thing he could lay hands on and threw it at me. And then he took up his stick, and would have beaten me within an inch of my life if he had caught me; but I dodged, and got out of the door, and ran off into the park.

"I stayed there all the afternoon, lying under the trees, feeling just as miserable as ever I could. I tried not to think, but it all kept coming back—mother's white face, Alice's scared look, and father's—but I can't talk of that; it makes me feel all angry again. When it grew dark I didn't know what to do. I knew father would never let me go home, and yet I knew mother would fret and worry if I kept away; so I just wandered about, until somehow or other I came round here. It was late then, and moonlight, and I thought it looked quiet and safe, so I slipped down and spent the night here in the cart.

"I stole back to Gresse Street in the morning, after I knew father would be at work. I could see from the street that the bedroom blind was down—that wasn't usual; and when I stepped in out of the noise and the sunshine, it all seemed so silent I felt reg'lar frightened. I didn't dare go into either room for fear father might be there, so I leant against the wall and waited. After a while Alice came out, her eyes all full of tears, and her two hands clasped tight together as though to crush back all that she was feeling. She looked glad to see me, but she could hardly speak. We went into the sitting-room

together, and there she told me all bit by bit as she could.

“ ‘Father has never been back since he rushed out of the door after you,’ she said; ‘he went straight on till he came to the turning down to the Lion, and then he strode down there, and we have not seen him since. Mother sat quite still after you went, and I didn’t dare move or speak, I felt so terrified. Then presently she seemed to come back with a start; the colour rushed into her face, and she tried to stand up; then she gave a little cry, and put her hand to her heart, and fell down in a faint. Mrs. Meadows, who lodges downstairs, heard her fall, and she came up and helped me to move her in here. It was a long time before we could get her round, and then several times during the night she went off again. Mrs. Meadows sent her boy for the doctor this morning. He has only left about an hour, and he didn’t tell me anything; only, since he went Mrs. Meadows has been so kind and gentle, I am afraid mother is very bad.’

“ Alice was crying all the time she was telling this, and she could hardly quiet herself to go back into mother’s room. I went with her. Mother smiled when she saw me, and made me sit down beside her and hold her hand. By-and-by, when she could bear it, I told her how sorry I was. She said she knew I had done it because I loved her, but it wasn’t right; and now that she was going away from us, she

wouldn't like to feel father and I weren't friends. She begged me to stay at home, and not sleep out at night again, and she would make it all right with father for me. So Alice and I waited on her together, and we both knew we should lose her soon.

"Father never came near us for a whole week. Where he went we don't know; but I think he must have been drinking nearly all the time, for he did look such a sight when he came in. He had never lost his self-respect before; he used to walk like a man, and keep himself tidy. But when he came home that Sunday his clothes were all dirty, and his hair ragged and untidy; he shuffled his feet along and stooped his head forward like an old, old man: he didn't look a bit like himself. I felt mother shiver all over as she saw him, but she welcomed him as brightly as she could, and sent me away till she had spoken to him.

"I went down and leaned against the lamp-post in front, watching the children outside. Opposite there is a small boot-shop, kept by a little deformed man: he always used to be sitting on the wide window-ledge mending and making boots and shoes, and watching everything that went on. I don't know why, but he always seemed to have a spite against me. I never passed him but what he would say something bitter. He always would call me Lionel, too, and I didn't like that; the neighbours used to say that I had no right to such a 'fine name.' Well,

as soon as he saw me that day, he edged himself closer to the window, and called out in his shrill voice, so that everybody could hear: 'Well, Lionel Franklin, I hope you are satisfied with your work now — mother dead, and father a drunkard! Not very comforting reflections for a gentleman like you; for, as sure as I live, it's you that has killed your mother and driven your father to the drink, and it's a pretty piece of work to blame oneself for!'

"It stung me through and through. I didn't know what to do. I felt the blood tingling all through me, as I turned round and saw his sneering face looking triumphantly at me. 'Mother is not dead!' I cried; 'and you've no right to speak so of father: he's not a—' But I couldn't deny that; and then he laughed, and some of the others laughed too. I felt as though I might have done anything, I was so angry; but then suddenly I thought perhaps it was true, so I just turned round and ran off. On and on I went, I didn't seem as though I could ever stop; those cruel words rang in my ears, and I wanted to drown them. Wouldn't some one tell me they wasn't true! But nobody knew, and it didn't seem either as though God knew or God cared. I felt so wicked, and the world all black and dark, and nothing left to hope for. I don't know where I went to, or where I slept, or what I ate. Somehow at last I got out into the country, where there were green fields and trees, and a river was flowing, and the birds sang, and there



was no smoke or dust, but it was all cool and quiet. And there things began to look different. Lying under the trees, and looking up into the blue sky, I began to leave off being angry, and began to feel sorry. I thought perhaps it really was true, and I had killed— O Mrs. Parker, you don't think I did kill mother, do you?"

There was such a ring of anguish in his tones that Janet could hardly believe this load of sorrow was being borne by the bright boy whose active movements and sunny face she had so often watched.

"No, no, laddie," she said; "God's own time had comè for taking her to the bright home above. Ye couldna ha' saved her if ye'd tried. She was a-weary-ing for the rest up yonder, so dinna greet about the way she went, be sure it was just His ain 'right way;' and though it was a bit sad and lonesome for her a while, the rest up there is all the sweeter, and you must think of her as a-waiting and a-watching for her bairns, and loving them every bit as she did down here."

Broomy's curly head was bent down upon his hands, and she could not see his face; but she knew he was crying bitterly, so she waited for him, her own tears flowing too. When he lifted up his face, she was almost startled by the worn, pained expression on it.

"Mrs. Parker," he said, "if only you could make me believe that! For two years those cruel words

have haunted me, until it seems as though they must be true. You see it *was* through me father took to drinking mostly. When I was but a baby, as I told you, it was my whining that kept him away from home; and that day it was my blow on his arm that changed him from the man he was to what he now is. Oh, I wish, I wish I had died with her!"

Broomy stopped; he was sobbing as though his heart would break.

"Laddie," said Janet softly, "shall we tell the dear Lord about it? He could make it plain."

"O Mrs. Parker, I have asked him often and often, but it does not get any clearer!"

But he did not resist, and they knelt down together, while the good little woman told his story so simply to One who knew and who cared, that Broomy rose comforted, and saying good-night, went out.

The moon was clear and bright, and the air felt pleasant to his heated cheeks, so he wandered away to his favourite retreat in the park, feeling too restless to sleep; and Janet watched on through the night hours, waiting for Joe's return, her kind heart overflowing with love and sympathy for her new little friend.

## CHAPTER V.

### NOT QUITE UNCARED FOR.



HANET PARKER had judged wisely in thinking it would be well for Broomy to tell her his tale. She had caught in his voice the first beginnings of a don't-care tone, and she had gathered from the way in which he spoke of his father that the struggle not to despise him was being fought less bravely than before. Her womanly instinct told her that no words from her would rouse the boy's better feelings; only his mother's voice, only the recollection of his mother's sweet face, could sweep away the dark cloud that was settling over him, and send him out to try again, a humbler and a braver boy. Her hopes were realized. Long before he had finished his story his voice had assumed a gentler tone. As the memories of past days awoke, they brought back quieter and more loving thoughts. The promise to his mother, her prayers, her wishes, came back with new force; genuine sorrow for his father replaced the hard feelings against him which he had been harbouring of late, and he

left Janet's door with better resolutions than he had formed for a long time.

It was not often that Broomy let his thoughts dwell on this sad part of his life. His was naturally such a sunny, bright temperament that he would struggle to shake off depression or sorrow of any sort, and would not let himself think. But in trying to forget his sorrow, he now remembered that he had also forgotten his duty. Who was watching over his father now that Alice was ill? Who ever said a kind word to him, or saw that he was safely home at night? Mother had asked him to do it; how often had he tried to remember? Broomy was looking at things honestly as he walked restlessly in the moonlight. He was not the boy to flinch from facing a difficulty when it arose, so now he set himself to think what he ought to do. "It's two years now," he thought, "since I slept at home. I wonder if Alice would like me to go back. I said I never would; but now she is ill, I could if she wanted. Father need never know; and I could tidy up a bit, and light the fire for her, and so on. I'm glad I shall have reg'lar wages; she can always have some. I wonder how much father gives her now? Poor Alice! she says she don't think she'll live long. Oh dear! Why *did* he say 'Courage,' I wonder?" Thinking of Alice brought back Policeman B's kind words. A passing remark dropped by a neighbour concerning his sister's illness had cost Broomy those bitter tears the previ-

ous afternoon, and with the memory of his trouble came back the memory of the comfort offered him. "I s'pose it *is* cowardly not to do one's duty, and it was mother asked me. Well, I'll try."

A sort of longing to see his former home again impelled him to walk to Gresse Street. He stood again leaning against the lamp-post, looking up at the windows and thinking of the past. All the lights were out, and it looked gloomy as the boy stood almost alone in the deserted street; so he passed it by, and walked on to where his father and sister were now living. Shortly after his wife's death Franklin had moved farther up the street into a shabby little house spanning an archway leading into a narrow passage called Black Horse Court. The first floor into which they first moved was soon deserted, for money was scarce, and before long two small attics at the top of the house were all that the father could afford to provide for his child. "It is quieter, and more airy, and nearer the sky," Alice would say brightly when Broomy spoke discontentedly of the low roofs and the creaking floors.

The street was tolerably quiet as Broomy stood there in the deep black shadow thrown across the pavement by the clear light of the full moon. "Oh, I have been bad," thought the poor boy; "I didn't know I had been so wicked. I have been angry mother died, angry father would drink, angry almost with Alice for being ill, and I've not tried one bit;

but I will now—O mother, indeed I will. Perhaps you can see me down from among the angels; and if you can't, God can tell you."

And his resolutions did not end in wishes and words, but he set himself steadily and bravely to try. He felt humbled and saddened, he seemed to stand so alone; and there were difficulties all around him—difficulties he never dreamed of then. But there were hands ready to help him, of which he knew as little too, and a loving God in heaven was watching over the boy, strengthening his wish to do right, and teaching him to seek the power to do it alone from Himself.

After that he walked back again to Janet's yard, and was soon asleep in his old resting-place.

Broomy awoke the next morning with a strange sensation of something having happened. He felt so much older and graver he could not tell what was the matter. Gradually, however, he remembered the thoughts of the previous night, and the resolutions then taken; and then recollecting that new duties too awaited him, he sprang up and was off to the pump. Joe appeared at five to take the cart round, so Broomy went by himself to the yard, and was soon busy in the packing-shed.

The day passed quickly away; and at five in the afternoon workmen and boys streamed out of the store, and began to make their ways to their different homes. Broomy wandered about irresolutely for

a few minutes, doubting if he should go and see Janet or no; finally the desire to be once more in that cozy little kitchen conquered, and in a few minutes he was lingering about the door. He could see the kind little woman busy at her work, and could catch her voice as she gently hummed some air; otherwise all seemed quiet, and feeling satisfied Joe was out, Broomy knocked softly at the door.

"Eh, laddie," she said, as she opened it, "and why have ye kept away the whole long day? Come in and have some tea."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Parker," said Broomy; "I didn't come for a meal, I wanted just to talk to you for a bit. You see, I've been thinking—"

"Oh ay, laddie, but a cup o' tea won't hurt ye first, and then I must hear all the rest after." So she bustled about, and was soon watching the boy enjoy his simple meal.

"I've got my tale to tell too," she said, "but you must finish yours first." So they settled down as they had done the night before, and Broomy went on:—

"I was a whole week away from town, and then I walked back again. I wanted so to see mother, and to hear her tell me that it was *not* my fault she was so ill. I did not go to the house till it was Monday evening and nearly dark. I was afraid of the old cobbler opposite, afraid of the neighbours and boys, and afraid of seeing father. I just crept in as quietly

as I could, and went and sat down on the top stair to wait for Alice. It was all so still and quiet I thought she must be asleep. I fancy I nearly went to sleep too whilst sitting there waiting. Presently some one talking on the next landing roused me, and I began to listen. I don't know what they said to each other, only after I had listened a minute I knew mother was dead—dead,—and I had not seen her again. You can't tell how it felt. I gave a sort of scream, it was so terrible, and I jumped up and cried out to them over the balustrade, 'Tisn't true. What do you mean? Mother isn't dead; she can't be.' Alice came out when she heard my voice, and drew me gently into the sitting-room. Father was crouching over the fire, but he didn't take any notice. Alice told me all about it, and gave me her messages for me, and we tried to comfort one another. But I don't care to talk about it all, so you won't mind.

"Then a long sad time began: father took to drinking worse than ever, and Alice got to look pale and weak. She still went every day to Maples', but she was hardly strong enough for the work. Father never spoke to me, and I used hardly ever to see him. Alice and I both thought it better I should keep out of his way altogether; for if ever I spent an evening at home, he was sure always to drink harder than ever, so I soon took to sleeping round here reg'lar. Alice says she believes he can't bear the sight of me, not so much 'cause he doesn't like me, as why it



makes him think of the last twelve years of mother's life; and he cared so for her, it almost maddens him to think how he treated her, and so he drowns it as best he can.

"I took to sweeping a crossing then at Errelle Square, away where there is a little something green and a little fresh air. They used to laugh at me, and say why didn't I go where there was more people? But I never could bear the noise and bustle; and I managed to get along somehow with what I earned there, and I generally could give Alice something. She can't work at all now. She just gets about a little in the morning, and then lies down all the rest of the day. She does a little needle-work, and mends father's things and mine, but it's lonely for her. I creep in when father's out, and I always go on Sunday afternoon to read to her. Alice is wonderfully good to me."

Broomy stopped, and Janet, looking down on his bright open face, wondered that one so young should have so much to bear, and longed to help him more.

"And now I must tell you what I remember of your mother," she said. "It was just the year before she married that she came up to the old place for the first time. She *was* a bonnie creature then, so light, so winsome, and so bright with the children, they never could love her enough, they said. The mistress was wonderful fond of her too; and who could help

it? I hadn't seen her twice before I felt to love her as though I had known her all my life. For her there was no one in the world like Robert; and it was pretty to see the colour mount up to her cheeks as she heard his step in the yard, and to see her proud look as she watched him driving the carriage so finely. Though she had known him pretty nigh all her life, he had only just asked her to be his wife, and the world seemed full of sunshine to them both in the consciousness of each other's love. She would come down to our cottage and tell me all the bright plans they had made together, and describe it all so clear I seemed to see them in the rose-covered lodge. She would bring Master Lionel with her; and a bonnie boy he was, just like his own mother, only he was sturdy and strong, and she, poor dear, was always weak and ailing.

"The family did not stay as long as usual that year, and right sorry I was when they went away; for I loved your mother dearly, and used to wait for her bright face to look in at the cottage every day. Long ago I was nurse in that family when Mrs. Raine was but a bairn herself; and when we married they gave Joe and me the gamekeeper's cottage, and when they were down in the south I used to take care of the large house. Eh, laddie, it was an ill day when we came south. Joe's never been the man he was since we entered London, and maybe I've failed in my duty sometimes. We must both start off again

afresh, you and I, and try and be more ready to do all He gives us. Your sweet mother loved Him so, she taught me many and many a lesson with her simple, earnest faith; and though I only saw her for that short time, I've often brought to mind her words in these dark days."

Joe's unsteady step passing the window warned Janet that it was time Broomy should be going, and before Joe was round to the door the boy was safely in the cart. She had not yet spoken to her husband about her new little friend. The morning was the only time when he was sober; and till she had heard the end of Lionel's tale, and knew his exact circumstances, she could not quite make up her mind as to the wisest course to take. Now she had thought it all over, and her wish was that Broomy, instead of sleeping outside of their house, should be taken in as a lodger, and for this she sought to gain her husband's consent.

The house in which the Parkers lived was a little offshoot at the end of a row, in a dark situation, and sadly tumbled down and dingy; but to Janet it was far preferable to a room in a house crowded with families. The rent was high, it was true, but even Joe felt it was worth some little effort to keep their tiny abode to themselves.

It was a hard thing for Janet to make up her mind to make this request of her husband. She never asked him for anything now. The days had gone by

when to contribute to her pleasure was his chief joy, and she had learned to dread the dark look and the angry word that followed any petition on her part. For the sake of another, however, she would try; and as she prepared his coffee and fried his bacon the next morning, she made up her mind that, as soon as he should come in from the store, she would open the subject.

His face was brighter than usual as he entered the room at eight o'clock. The press of work had been great that morning, and there had been no time for the usual early visit to the tavern, where the "one glass" to begin the day with so often led on to a morning of drinking. He was no sooner seated at the table, therefore, than Janet began:—

"Joe, do ye mind the time at Laune when Master Lionel fell into the duck-pond, and that bright, winsome young thing ye were wont to call Maidie got him out again so cleverly?"

Joe did "mind" certainly, but he did not choose to say so.

"Ye were unco fond of her, Joe; do ye mind when she was going away, ye promised if ever she had a boy of her ain ye'd teach him yersel' the long Scotch words she never could understand? We never heard of her after the missus died till news came to me the other day. She has gone away from us too, Joe. There was sore trouble came; Robert was none the man he promised to be, and the joy was all driven


out of her young life by the drink; and when she could bear it no more, she died, poor bairn. Eh, Joe, but it's a sad thing to think of; and she's left *two* bairns. 'Twas the boy told me the tale hisself, and he's just the very bonniest laddie I ken. He's got her own sweet eyes and expression; but he's got his father's dark curly hair and tall lithesome figure. It's a sad life he's leading now. Poor Robert is so altered he can't bear the sight of his ain son, and the bairn wanders about, and there's no one as cares for him. I was thinking there was some little we might do for him, Joe. There's always the sofa-bed the missus gave me down here, and no one to make any use of it. If I might let him sleep here, Joe, he'd never get in your way, and he'd brighten the house up."

Joe had made no sign that he was listening all the time, and when Janet stopped silence reigned till the end of the meal. Joe rose at last, and went into the back-kitchen to wash his hands, and Janet waited, disappointed, but not daring to speak. Her husband was an unusually long time at the tap, she thought, and when he came back and took down his hat, he stood slowly rubbing it round and round. He finally moved towards the door, however, without speaking; but there he halted, and as he opened it, he said gruffly, "He must be up before I come down of the mornings; I can't have him littering about the place," and before Janet could speak he was gone. She went

about her work with a light heart that morning; one of her wishes had come true. "I was a stranger, and ye took me in," she said softly to herself, and her heart rose up in thankfulness for another prayer answered.

## CHAPTER VI

ALICE FRANKLIN.

ARLY that afternoon Janet came slowly down the creaking stairs, dressed in her walking things. "Joe's sure not to be in till five," she said to herself, as she raked out the fire, "nor Broomy neither, and it's barely two now; so there's time enough."

A very trim little figure was Janet, as she turned away from the door with her basket on her arm. Her long residence in London could not efface the stamp of *country* that was unmistakably written upon her ways and dress. The neat gray skirt, the quiet plaid shawl, and the black silk bonnet with its snow-white cap, looked as though no London smoke nor dirt could soil them. But it was the quiet, happy face looking out from under the bonnet that caused more than one passer-by to look back, almost regretfully, as she wended her way through the crowded streets. "Why do we so seldom see a sight like that? Why are our streets filled with thriftless, slatternly women, who live because they *must*, and

not because they *may*?" was the half unconscious thought of one whose notice Janet attracted. But the good little woman was ignorant of all this, and she plodded on, busy with her thoughts and plans. Crossing the Tottenham Court Road, she soon found the turning into Gresse Street, and here her speed slackened. "So that's the lamp-post," she thought, "and there's the cobbler's shop, and this—poor lamb! does she really live here?"

Janet had turned away from the main street, and over the archway recognized the house Broomy had described. Certainly it did look very dismal that afternoon,—broken windows, dirty steps, and untidy passages all spoke of poverty, misery, and drink. Undaunted, Janet set to work to climb the broken stairs. "Poor Edith! if only she had ever guessed this," she thought, as she reached the topmost landing, and stopped to knock at the door. A surprised "Come in" answered her. Alice was not used to visitors; no one but Broomy and Robert ever climbed those stairs, and the unexpected knock rather fluttered her. She was more astonished still when the door opened and she saw before her the very dearest little woman she could possibly imagine.

"There, don't get up, poor dear; I know all about you, and I have only come to talk a little, and to cheer you up."—She's surprised to see me, and no wonder; she didn't know she'd got a friend in London. — "There, let me do the fire up a bit;



that's it. Now, lie still and I'll tell you all about it."

Alice was too weak and tired to attempt to rise; too astonished at the motherly kindness of Janet's manner to ask any questions.

"Now, dearie, how are you?" said Janet, drawing a chair beside the bed upon which Alice was resting.

"I am rather tired this afternoon," Alice replied. "I've been trying to tidy up a bit; but it is so difficult."

It might be difficult, and certainly was so, to the delicate girl, but that did not keep her back from doing all that lay in her power; and even to Janet's eyes the room looked scrupulously clean, almost cheery. Alice was evidently faithfully fulfilling her promise to her mother, and it was not her fault if the father turned his back upon his little home, and chose the tap-room as his favourite resort.

Janet seemed instinctively to understand how down-hearted and tired Alice was feeling. She asked no questions, troubled her with no formalities, but, sitting by her, told her how she had known and loved her sweet young mother; how Broomy had won a warm place in her heart; and how, knowing all the sad story, she had come round to see if she could help the young girl in her lonely struggle.

Alice hardly spoke, but she seemed unable to take her eyes off Janet's face; it was such a rest and refreshment to have something so homelike and so

loving to look upon ; and when the good little woman had finished her tale, and bent down her head to kiss the girl, Alice put her arms round her neck, and returned her embrace with such affection that Janet's warm heart brimmed over with pleasure, and she turned away feeling she had won another friend in the world.

The basket was now opened, and a refreshing cup of tea and delicate slice of toast strengthened the girl to do her part of the talking

"It's so good of you," she said ; "since mother died there never has been any one to come to me like this. It has been work, work all day, and mostly at nights long waiting-times for father, and then the disappointment and grief of seeing him come in as he should not be. Oh, Mrs. Parker, I can't help feeling glad you know what *that* is, though I do feel so sorry for you. I think it is just the hardest thing any one can have given them to bear."

Alice was warm in her praises of her brother, and Mrs. Parker found from the sister's tale how little the boy had let her guess of the sad part he had borne in the long struggle.

"You don't know how beautifully he behaved to father after mother died," she said. "For some time I was almost too ill to do anything, and so he used to do all. He was always up early, as mother had been, and used to get father's breakfast for him, as she had done. Often, I know, he has bought him an

egg or a herring with his own money, so that he might have nothing to complain of at home. Then, as soon as he heard father coming, he would slip off and keep out of the way until he was gone, and then back he would come to clear it all up. Father was still terribly bitter against him, and used to say such cruel things I wondered how he could control himself. I know his heart was almost broken with losing mother, and to have father turn against him so seemed too much. But he was so brave, and so gentle and tender to me.

“Very soon father moved over here, and instead of three rooms, as we had in Gresse Street, he only took two, this one and my little slip opening out of it behind. I knew that he meant Lennie to go from home; and Lennie saw it too, and it hurt him at first almost past bearing. He found his way again to your yard. It has been the saving of him, Mrs. Parker, to let him sleep there. Nothing could persuade him to sleep here after what father had done; and there is no telling where he might not have got to. It was so good of you to let him come, when you did not know a bit who he was.

“I went back to work again then, and I have kept on ever since, till within the last three weeks, and then I was forced to tell them at Maples’ that I could not come any more. They had been wonderfully good to me, and had kept me on some while after I was next to no good, so I was sorry to leave.

"Lennie never failed in coming to see me as often as he could. Always on Sunday afternoons he reads to me; and often in the morning we used to go to church together, and he would bring his friends, Sparrow, and little Dick, and Kit, as often as he could. Often in the week, too, he would look in upon me, almost every day at first. He used to find it terribly hard in those days. Though he had been in London so long, he had not seen much of real London life—mother had kept him with her so much, and he had always been used to tell her everything. Sometimes he would come rushing in, as though to try and get away from it all. He would clench his hands together, and his face would all flush up as he would say: 'You don't know how hard it is to keep straight, Alice. You don't know, when I'm cold and hungry, and have nothing to get a mouthful with, what it is to keep from taking things I shouldn't. Others do, and nobody catches them. But it's harder still, when I'm feeling like that, and some one offers to stand treat to a glass of something warm; it looks so bright in there out of the cold and the rain, and it always seems as though a little could do no harm. But don't fear,' he would finish up with; 'mother would have minded too much, and I couldn't grow up to be as father is.' I can't help wondering, Mrs. Parker, what will become of them when I die; for you know I am so weak I don't think I can get better now. Father has always been fond of me, and

he is still, when he remembers. He always brings me some of his wages; and if I go there'd be nobody for him, and nobody for Lennie to come to either. I can't help troubling."

"Leave it, lassie, leave it. God takes care of the days as they come. We canna make out the way beforehand, and he doesn't mean us to."

They were both silent for some time, thinking how true and yet how hard to believe those words were. Then Alice said,—

"Mrs. Parker, did Lennie tell you about mother's things? You know father took them all."

"No, dearie, he never mentioned it; he spoke of some flowers and photographs you had."


"Oh yes, just those; mother gave them me as soon as she was ill. But there was her Bible and Prayer-book, her watch and her ring, and one or two other things: he took and locked them all up in that box on the shelf as soon as she was gone; and he always carries the key about with him, and won't let any one handle it but him. The worst is, mother wrote a letter for Lennie when she felt she was weaker and he never came back. She used to write a bit at a time; and then when it was done she gave it me, and told me to be sure and let him have it. It was in the night, and almost as soon as she had given it me she went off in a faint, and I had to attend to her. I slipped it inside her Bible to keep it safe, and there it stayed during those last sad days; and afterwards,

when father took the things, he took that too before I remembered about it. I have asked him to let me look into the box so often, he gets so angry I shall not dare do it again. You see mother fretted so for Lennie; we did not know what was keeping him away. I think perhaps she half guessed, for when she hardly knew what she was saying she used to whisper about him to herself as though she understood; but she died without ever really knowing."

The flush on Alice's cheek warned Janet that her visit must be brought to a close; so after a few more words of sympathy and encouragement she took her leave, promising to come again in a few days. "I was sick, and ye visited me," were the words that rang in Janet's ears as she made her way back through the noisy crowded streets; and in spite of all the sadness, her voice rose up in a song of praise that one so feeble and so weak might take these words as spoken for her, and might toil on hopeful of the sweet "Well done" awaiting her in a brighter world.

## CHAPTER VII

### LONG PARTED FRIENDS.

“O you know, Mabel, I saw some one in London to-day that reminded me of Janet Parker. I was walking down the Tottenham Court Road, getting away as fast as I could from the noise and the crowd, when I nearly ran against the trimmest little figure you can imagine. Nobody but Janet could so far defy the demands of fashion as to look like that, good little woman that she always was.”

“O father, I wish, if it were, we could find her out. I should dearly like to see her again; it would seem like the old Laune days. Poor Janet Parker! she never could bear the idea of coming to London.”

“I am almost sure it must have been she,” continued Mr. Raine. “It did not strike me at first. I only thought what a contrast she was to the tawdry, slovenly women one generally sees, and how, in her quiet way, she preached a sermon the whole way as she went along. Then it struck me both face and

figure were familiar ; and the more I think of it, the more I feel sure it was she."

"I shall write to George at Laune, and ask him her address ; he is sure to know. She *would* be pleased to see us again, dear Janet ; it will be nice to find her out."

This conversation took place between Mr. Raine and his eldest daughter Mabel, in the comfortable drawing-room of No. 9 Errelle Square, where they were spending the winter months. Mabel was now twenty years of age, and as head of her father's household was trying in every way to prove herself a comfort to him. She keenly felt her motherless position, and the shadow of sorrow resting on her features gave a peculiar softness and sweetness of expression to her face.

Since his wife's death Mr. Raine had spent most of his time abroad, sometimes taking his children with him, sometimes leaving them at home with their Aunt Caroline, who had lived with them since Mrs. Raine's death. He was getting tired, however, of his roving life, and feeling that as his children were growing up it became his duty to devote himself more entirely to them, he brought them all to London for the winter, whilst he looked for a place in the country where he could again settle and make a home. His eldest son, now turned eighteen, had just left school, and was preparing with a tutor for an examination ; while Guy, his second boy, was spend-



ing a few months at home preparatory to entering upon a course of study to prepare himself for the medical profession. Mabel and two little girls just beginning school-room life in earnest completed the number. So it was a bright party that gathered around him day after day, though the great blank of a mother's absence never ceased to be felt.

Mabel kept her word about writing to Laune, and before she retired for the night a letter was on its way to Scotland asking for Janet's address.

A week passed away, and then the answer came, giving the exact direction, and entering into minute details of how to get there.

"May I go this afternoon, father?" questioned Mabel, as she finished reading the letter aloud.

"Yes, by all means; and tell Janet I shall be coming round soon to look her and Joe up, and see if all his golden dreams have come true. They will not have anything like their pretty cottage at Laune. Do you remember it, Mabel?"

"O father! how can you? Why, even Guy recollects when we used to go every year to Scotland.—Don't you, Guy?" looking across at her second brother, who was vehement in upholding Mabel's statement.

"Take him with you then, Mabel, and see if his memory is as true as he would have us believe."

"And Evie too?" she asked.

"Yes, certainly; all of you, if you like. Janet will be quite overwhelmed."

"Harry," began Aunt Caroline objectively, "would it not be better to find out first what sort of a place it is? Tottenham Court Road is in a low neighbourhood, and this woman may be lodging in an undesirable quarter."

"No fear, Caroline; I saw Janet myself last week. She looked the picture of neatness, and I am sure could have come out of no house I should not like my children to go in. You had better go with them yourself if you are anxious," he added, as he rose and left the room.

"Yes, I think I had better.—Mabel dear, I should be able to go at three o'clock, if you will be disengaged then."

"Yes, aunt," said Mabel, trying not to look disappointed.

"Caught, Miss Mabel!" cried Guy, hugging his sister rather too energetically for her comfort, as the door closed behind their aunt, and cutting a wild caper round the room.

"O Guy!" said Mabel reproachfully.

"Now didn't you feel cross when Madame said she would go? and didn't you, like a good little thing, think how wicked it was to feel cross, and put on a sweet little smile to cover it all up? Now don't 'O Guy' me. You are fairly caught, and you are a naughty little girl, and I am ashamed of you quite.

But she shan't go, Mab; so don't trouble yourself; I'll manage it," and he banged out of the room before Mabel could stop him.

Guy was a bright, frank boy, sixteen years old, full of life and spirits, causing Mabel endless anxiety by his wild pranks, but at the same time repaying her for it all by giving her his full and unhesitating confidence, and bestowing upon her more affection than he gave to any one else. No one but Mabel knew how long and how sorely Guy mourned his mother's loss. Even now, at the mention of her name, his cheeks would flush and a quiver of pain would flit across his sunny face, and he could never speak of her to any one but Mabel. Nobody guessed this, however, and the occasional outburst of the boy's natural spirits when after their mother's death the house was hushed and silent, had caused him to be misunderstood by many. There was only one person in the house with whom Guy never could get on, and that was his aunt Caroline. Do what he might, she always misunderstood him. She never saw the point of his jokes, never guessed the reason of his fun, and to her Guy seemed an incomprehensible enigma. Mr. Raine's sister had undertaken a difficult task in taking up her abode with him and his family. She would have suited him admirably had there been no children, but she was so fussy and fidgety in her kindness, so unsympathetic in the use of her authority, that she failed to gain their affection or win

their confidence. "She never could have been young," her nieces and nephews always said, and it certainly did appear as though all memories of her childhood had faded away. She meant to be kind, but having little tact, she worried her young charges, though they knew she was genuine and true at the bottom; and so all respected, though, at the same time, they rather pitied, Aunt Caroline.

"Guy is right," thought Mabel, as she rose to leave the room. "I wish I did not get cross so soon, but I did want to see Janet alone first. She will want to hear about mother, and I cannot bear to talk of her when Aunt Caroline is present; she never knew her well enough to love her truly."

Guy meant what he said, however. He had more than half guessed Mabel's feelings, and he had determined she should have her visit to herself. Accordingly he set to work to devise a plan, and was soon rapidly walking through the park to the house where his aunt, Mrs. Malane, was living. Guy was a favourite everywhere, and a loud whoop of pleasure from three little boy cousins announced his arrival at their house. A regular romp followed, and when he had thoroughly tired them out, he threw himself into an easy chair, and began to disclose the real object of his visit.

"Aunt Agatha, I thought you were a woman of honour."

"So did I, nephew Guy."

"Then why don't you keep your promises?"

"Promises?"

"Yes. It is three weeks now since you faithfully promised Madame that you would take her to see Elijah Walton's pictures. She is dying to go, I know; but she doesn't dare to remind you. I would not put it off a day longer if I were you."

Aunt Agatha looked up. She knew of course that there was some second reason.

"No mischief, Guy, I hope?"

"Now, auntie, you are always suspecting me. Why should I not be anxious for Madame's happiness as well as my own? She revels in art. I shall take her myself if you don't."

"I wish you would not call her Madame; it is very disrespectful, when she is your father's own sister."

"Can't help it, auntie. Everybody did in France, and so I contracted the habit. It's the one French word she understands; and, as she said herself, it is so much more dignified than *mademoiselle*."

"Naughty boy, you should not talk against your elders. But really I had quite forgotten about the pictures. We might as well go to-day. I shall not have another free afternoon this week. I will write a note for you to take. The carriage shall call for her at half-past two, so I shall expect no answer."

"Hurrah! auntie, you *are* a brick!" and Guy went off quite satisfied.

Half an hour later he walked soberly into the morning-room, where Mabel and Miss Raine were sitting, and giving the note to his aunt, subsided into an arm-chair, and was soon apparently deep in a book.

"Mabel dear, here is a note from your aunt Agatha; this is really very kind of her. She wants me to go and see Elijah Walton's pictures this afternoon. I think your papa said he did not mind your going out alone, and really I cannot refuse anything so tempting."

Guy's face was immovable; but presently catching Mabel's eye, the least little smile hovering on his lips showed her to whom she owed this kind arrangement.

"Guy, you dear fellow, thank you so much; it is far more than I deserve," she said, as they watched their aunt comfortably settle herself in Mrs. Malane's carriage.

Janet was sitting in her little kitchen, busily knitting socks for Broomy, when a gentle knock at the door disturbed her.

"Miss Mabel! why, who would have thought of it! I was just thinking of you, as I often do these long afternoons, and wondering if ever I should see your sweet face again. Come in, come in, dearie; and Master Guy too, and Miss Evelyn. Oh! this is good; and to think you should have found me out, and taken the trouble to come yourself, after all this long,

long time," and Janet seemed hardly to know how to say enough, while real tears of pleasure glistened in her eyes. Then followed a long talk, questions and answers on both sides; there seemed so much to say. Mabel turned with a true affection to one who had been a faithful friend of her mother, and who remembered the old days, and loved them all so truly; it was quite a comfort to her to talk so freely to one who so fully sympathized in all their affairs. Then the voices hushed, and tears came instead of smiles, as Mabel told of the long, weary illness of her sweet mother and the happy home-going at last.

"You are like her, Miss Mabel, but none so like as Miss Evelyn; she's just the very image of her,"—almost too like, was Janet's thought, as she noticed the transparent whiteness of the child's fair skin, and the delicate colour that came and went upon her soft cheeks. "And Master Guy, he is a bonnie laddie, so like Master Lionel;" and then her thoughts flashed off to the young sailor's namesake, and she thought what a pair Guy and Broomy would make, with their bright, honest faces and their tall, well-built figures, and she half wondered why they must needs occupy such different positions in the world. And then she told them her new young friend's story, for she did not want to talk of herself, and she interested them deeply in the history of the fortunes of the Franklins, whom they both remembered.

"Mother used often to speak of Edith, and say we

must be sure and find her out, but I did not know whom to ask," said Mabel. "I should like to see this little Lionel, Janet; and you must take me to visit poor Alice, I recollect her so well."

Guy had listened silently to Janet's tale, and perhaps this insight into sorrows by which he felt he was in no likelihood of being affected, had taken deeper hold of him than of the others. Here was another boy, like himself, losing a mother whom he dearly and passionately loved, only his sorrow was doubled by the sad cause of her death; then he was thrown out into the world alone, fighting, struggling, with all against him. Somehow it interested him strangely. He was named after his own brother too, and yet it was only as if by accident they had heard of him at all. Guy could hardly remember his brother Lionel, but he seemed to have learned to know and to look up to him from hearing his mother speak of him so much. This boy had got a sister too, only she was dying: he was alone enough now,—how terrible it would be for him then! The intense solitariness of Broomy's position struck him, and his thoughts kept recurring to him all through the evening.

Mabel was perhaps more attracted to the gentle girl whose hard life was drawing to a close, and she longed to take her comforts that might ease her in her weariness. She shrunk, however, with such disgust from a man who let himself be overcome by his appetite for drink, that to enter the home of such an



one would cost her no little effort. Mabel knew little of the prevalence of the sin of drink in our metropolis. She looked upon it as an evil only indulged in by the lower classes, and "surely they are not to blame when they have so little else," she would say as she dismissed the subject; for, to tell the truth, it troubled her seldom. She little knew that through every class of society this terrible curse is felt, ruining our noblest, debasing our cleverest, brutalizing the men and women of our towns and villages. Little she knew of the cry from thousands of broken hearts, "Oh, when shall drinking be no more?"

Many promises to come again brought the visit to a close; and as the carriage drove away Janet's heart went up in a great "Thank you" for this new happiness. Her face was all smiles and sunshine as she greeted Joe with the news.

"The young lady herself! she always was a bonnie lassie," said Joe, looking unfeignedly pleased at the compliment paid to him and his wife by this visit.

"Ay, Joe; and she'd forgotten none of the old times. And she brought a message from the master himself to say he'd come one of these days."

"Did he then?" said Joe, while a look of shame overspread his face; and he said almost gently, "Eh, Janet woman, but this is none such a room as is fit for them to come in!"

"Joe, if we *both* set to work we could have a bonnie wee house of our ain again." Janet's eyes were full of tears; it was so long since she had had a kind word from her husband, and she had wearied for it sadly. Now here he was, speaking to her and looking at her almost as he had done in years gone by. She fairly trembled with pleasure and hope. "Joe, if we only made up our minds to try, God *would* help us; he wants you, I know he does; and if we both pulled the same way we'd be sure to get on."

"It's too late now, Janet."

She felt from his tone that she must say no more, and she was wise to hold her peace. It was long since Joe had really honestly looked at himself or judged himself by any standard. He did so to-night. All the manly, better part of his nature woke up with this sudden bringing back of a long unremembered past. What was he now in comparison to what he used to be? what was his home compared with that he had formerly had? Had he done himself, had he done his wife justice? Such were the searching questions that arose and demanded answer, and all he could reply to one and all was, "No, a thousand times no!" He was moody and abstracted during tea-time, and no sooner was the meal over than he took his hat and went out. Janet sighed, she knew what going out at that late hour meant; and though she noticed that he shut the door gently,

instead of banging it as usual, her hopes faded away.

But Joe turned his steps away from usual resorts that evening, and wandered off in an opposite direction to that he most frequently took. He was still thinking in the same strain, and listening unwillingly to the upbraidings of his conscience. He was getting on in years now, but still he was strong and hearty; life might yet hold many glad things for him if he would turn over a new leaf and begin again in real earnest. Wishes for the power to form better resolutions, longings to win back the old self-respect, the old happy home-life with his wife, and the freedom and independence he had once enjoyed, rose within him with such burning desire that there and then, had he thought to seek God's help, Joe might have begun a nobler, happier life. But the season of sober thought, so rare now, was suddenly interrupted by a slap on the back and a cheery voice exclaiming,—

“Moping, Parker! why, what's up, old fellow? Come along with me.”

“Not to-night, Davy.”

“Yes, come along. Why, man, you are shivering with the cold, I declare. Come and warm yourself up a bit, and sing us one of your Scotch songs; we want you.”

And Joe went. He was feeling low and miserable, certainly; and it was very dismal dawdling about

all alone, when he might be enjoying himself with his friends. So he offered very feeble resistance to the kindly meant persuasions, and drowned the better thoughts that had arisen in a long evening at the tavern.

Janet was destined to two disappointments that evening. She had not seen Broomy all that week, and so had not yet told him of her wish that he should lodge with them. She was beginning to feel anxious, and listened for the light boyish step till the lateness of the hour forbade her to hope any longer, and she sadly put by the meal she had deferred to clear away till he should come, and sat down with a sinking heart to wait for a sadder home-coming. Poor Janet! sometimes her heart really sank within her till she felt hopeless about her husband. Year after year she had prayed and watched and striven to save him from the ever-growing fascination of the drink. But it was all in vain. She would dwell fondly on the past at times, and remember how at Laune he had commanded the respect of all who knew him; for a more honest, hearty man than Joe Parker could not be found upon the estate. "And now," she would say sadly, "he does not love me, and he doesn't love himself; he loves just nothing but the drink. 'It takes away the heart,' as it says, and it's cruel, cruel." Such thoughts as these were filling Janet's heart as she sat alone in her room. After the great and unex-

pected pleasure of the afternoon, the evening seemed more dreary and lonely than ever; and no wonder the good little woman's hope waxed feeble and her tears flowed as the night passed into morning before Joe came home.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RESOLUTIONS.

**A**ND what had become of Broomy all this time? Hand and heart had been busy at work. Now that he was sure of regular employment, Broomy had been making up his mind upon several subjects. "She's awful kind," he said, thinking of Janet. "But now I am sure of reg'lar work, I don't think it will do to sleep in the cart any more; I must lodge somewhere, and I think if I got Mrs. Markham in the court to let me have her smallest room at eighteenpence a week, I should be near Alice and could do errands and so on for her, and do my part in looking after father." This must be talked over with Alice, however, and the day after Janet's visit to Black Horse Court, Broomy's bright face looked in at the door just as Alice was slowly clearing away the tea things.

"O Lennie! I *am* glad to see you. It's all right, father is out," in answer to his inquiring glance. "Now, I expect we both have lots of news. Yours first; mine will keep in case we don't have time."

"First of all, please to leave those things alone and let me wash up," said Broomy, affectionately pushing away his sister, and arming himself with the tea-cloth.

Alice settled herself in the large arm-chair and watched him moving about, till, everything having been cleared away, he stretched himself full length on the hearth-rug, and, boy-like, tumbled out his news in such a fashion that had Alice had no previous knowledge of what she was to hear, she would hardly have been able to follow his confused narration.

"She's just the dearest old lady you could see, Alice," he finished up with; "I only wish I could get her round here to brighten you up."

"And what if I have seen her, and she has been round here to see me, and, like you, I think, she is very dear and kind," said Alice; and then followed her side of the story, and a long talk between the two of all the little ins and outs. "God has sent her to us, I am sure, Lennie. We have needed a friend since mother died."

"Yes," said the boy sadly; "I wonder if she knows."

The silence which followed was again broken by Broomy, who evidently spoke with an effort,—

"Alice, how has father been lately?"

"Rather bad. The master threatens to dismiss him, Mrs. Markham tells me, and three times this week they have had to lead him home."

Broomy's eyes flashed, but he drove back the words that sprang to his lips.

"Now that I have reg'lar work, I am coming to live here again," he said bluntly.

Alice had often tried to persuade him to take a lodging somewhere and give up the cart, but he had always resisted; so she knew the effort it cost him to make up his mind to this, and considerately refrained from expressing the pleasure she felt.

"He can't bear to see me yet, I know," he added. "I shall get Mrs. Markham to let me have the little room next door, and then I can be in and out a bit. I think I'll go and see about it now," he added, rising.

Mrs. Markham willingly closed with the boy's offer. The room was so very small, barely more than a cupboard, that she was glad of the prospect of a regular lodger. Broomy intimated that he should not take possession till the next evening, and went out.

"Courage," he said, again thinking of Policeman B's words, as he turned down towards the door of the Lion. His heart sickened as he drew near and saw the blaze of light, and listened to the rough sounds of revel that rose and fell as the door swung on its hinges, and he certainly had need of courage. "This is what killed mother," he thought, "and what is wearing out Mrs. Parker. It is killing Alice too, and it lamed little Will." Broomy was one who thought deeply over the things that met him in daily life, and he had felt and known too much of the deadly effects



of drink not to hate it deeply. A hard, bitter feeling, almost contempt, often crept into his heart as he passed the brilliant palaces and saw the wretched men and women passing in and out of the open doors. But to-night he was trying to think round the other way. He knew if he wanted to help his father he must realize the terrible battle that would be necessary before he could overcome the strong habit, and must have a sympathy with him in the struggle. Young though he was, he knew much of the temptations that surround our London poor, and he shuddered to think how near he had sometimes been to yielding. It was only his mother's prayers, he often thought, that had kept him from giving up in despair. When the old, sad memories woke up in full force, and the struggle for an honest life seemed harder than usual, often and often an overwhelming impulse swept over him to give up the long, wearisome battle, and to do as others did. But, thank God, he had never yielded; and as he waited that night for his father, the terrible dangers he had been in, and the narrow escapes which he had had, came before him with a vividness and intensity he had never known before.

In after-years Lionel Franklin thanked God for that night of watching and waiting. Pacing the narrow pavement in the dark and the cold, he saw sights and learned lessons that were never erased from his memory; and in after-life, when it was the

earnest wish of his heart to save his fellow-men from the prevailing sin of our day, he would tell them in thrilling tones of the endless procession of misery, want, and vice which passed before his eyes that night, till they in their turn shuddered at the picture, and were more ready to rouse themselves to shake off the enthralling chains that bound them. It had always been his wish to keep from the drink; this night that wish took form and shape, and became a definite life resolve. He saw that the aimless repining over the past in which he had indulged so freely was more than useless. If he had been the cause of shortening his mother's days, it became more than ever his sacred duty to fulfil his promise to her, and to carry out what were her dearest wishes. If he had driven his father to the drink, by patient bearing and earnest acting might not he too have the privilege of helping him to break free from this cruel bondage? And further, how had he been using his life in God's sight? Was not this a work he might do for Him? Broomy's face grew very reverent as, leaning against a house in a dark corner, he looked up into the blue vault over his head, and sent up a prayer for help that he might never, never love the drink, and that he might save his father, for Christ's sake. He felt happier as he moved on, more humble and less alone.

By-and-by that figure for which he had watched so long appeared. The boy almost shrunk away; it was such a sore humiliation to have to call *that* father.

But, whispering "Courage" to himself, he followed slowly, ready to help the tottering footsteps should they stumble, or to guide the poor weak fellow home should his muddled brain forget the way. His assistance was not needed, however; and having watched Franklin safe into his room, Broomy turned away and walked briskly off to perform another self-imposed task. "He has got no son, so I don't see who's to do it if I don't," he said, as, having ascertained that Joe Parker was still at the tavern, he stationed himself outside to watch him safely home.

Broomy's thoughts travelled back to what Janet had told him of the younger days of these two men. "To think they should have known each other then," he soliloquized; "and now they have both gone the same way. They'd hardly care to meet again, I 'specs, they'd be so ashamed. I hope Sparrow and I shall never be like that."

Broomy had one great friend in London who looked up to him and was ready to follow him wherever he went. His friendship with Sparrow was now of two years' standing. It began in a somewhat remarkable manner shortly before his mother's death. Broomy was wandering up Regent Street one day, when his notice was attracted by this little fellow. He was very small, very ragged, and very dirty, but there was something in his bright face so essentially droll, Broomy could not help watching him. With his hands in his pockets he was wandering along,

heedless apparently of everything around ; but never a cab drove up to the pavement, Broomy noticed, but what this small boy was at the door ready to open and shut it. No matter which side of the street, he seemed instinctively to know which cabs would stop and where they would do so, and ducking under horses' heads and shaving omnibus wheels, as if by magic, he contrived to reach the door as cabby pulled up his horse. Broomy was thoroughly amused watching his proceedings. "His pockets must be getting quite heavy," he thought, as he almost unconsciously followed him along Oxford Street, too interested in the lad to leave him till he knew his whereabouts. Presently the boy turned to the right, and after a few steps, halted at the top of a court. "So that's where you live, is it?" thought Broomy—"St. Ann's Court. Well, it might be cleaner. I shall come and see you again, sir."

Broomy was turning away after his survey of the tall blackened houses shutting out the light and sunshine from the narrow paved court below, swarming with noisy children crawling and tumbling in every direction, when the boy moved on, and crossing the street, entered a low public-house at the corner.

"Whe-ew!" said Broomy, giving a low, prolonged whistle. "I shouldn't have thought it of you; I shouldn't, really. That won't do;" and running across the street, without a moment's hesitation he made his way into the bar. Dashing the glass out

of the boy's hand, he threw down sixpence on the counter, and seizing him by the collar, he hurried him out.

Broomy was almost as astonished as his young captive at this sudden assault. The small boy's face flushed angrily, and he struggled to set himself free from Broomy's grasp. They neither of them spoke for a minute, and then the ridiculous side of the question struck them, and they both laughed heartily.

"Who in the wide world are you?" said the small boy, as soon as he could speak.

"My name's Lionel Franklin. What's yours?"

"I've no such name, but such a name as them that knows me calls me," was the somewhat indefinite answer.

"I shall call you Sparrow, then, for I have wasted this whole afternoon watching you hop backwards and forwards across Regent Street."

"Well, and mayn't a feller feel thirsty after working as 'ard as I 'ave been?" questioned the still indignant lad.

"Not for stuff like that," said Broomy, sobering down at once. "Now, don't; you know you don't want it: you'll never grow up to be anything worth. Why, man, when you see all it does," pointing across to some three or four men and women issuing from the public-house.

The boy turned away abruptly.

"But why should you care?" he persisted. "I'm

myself, and not you. Why should not I drink if I like? it will only harm me. Why should not I indeed? You lives easy, I 'specs; you don't know what it is to grind all day. Is it for the likes of me to have the care of two brats? Am I to go on work, work, scrape, scrape to get enough pennies and ha'pennies to put clothes on their backs and food in their mouths? No, no; I've had enough of it. Others drink when they are miserable. So shall I; it will only harm me."

"Have you got a father?" questioned Broomy.

"No; died four years ago."

"A mother?"

The boy flinched. "What's that to you?" he asked.

"A great deal. Now, tell me; have you?"

"Well then, yes," very unwillingly.

"Sisters or brothers?"

"Bother the fellow! what right have you to question me like this? Yes, two brothers; more's the pity!"

"Won't it hurt your mother if you drink, and your brothers? They're younger than you, I suppose; they will be sure to do the same."

"Shut up, can't you; you don't know anything about it."

Angrily though he spoke, it was evident he was more pleased with Broomy than he was cross with him, and he did not offer to part company. Broomy

felt drawn to give a short sketch of his own life, hoping his father's history would be a warning to him. He painted too truly the misery brought upon them all by the drink for the boy not to feel that Broomy had good reason for the authoritative tone he had adopted; but he refused to give the promise his new friend tried to extract from him, not to touch the drink again.

"You've got your mother and sister," he objected, when Broomy insisted that if one could do without it surely another could.

"And you your mother and brothers," said Broomy.

"Only, mother drinks—that's all;" and, with a bitter laugh, he darted off, and was soon lost to sight.

This meeting was only the first of many. The boys suited each other exactly, and a true friendship sprung up between them; and when Broomy's troubles came thick upon him, Charlie Baker, as he discovered was the real name of his new friend, was the only one to whom he could unburden his heart. Little Will, Sparrow's lame brother, became an especial favourite with young Franklin, and he would often spend his spare hours in carrying the child into the park or amusing him in the crowded court. He became quite a hero to the crippled child, and his keen ears would catch the welcome footstep long before the bright face could be seen. Darker troubles had fallen on the three brothers since Broomy first knew them; their mother was now in prison for nine

months, and the little boys had a hard struggle for subsistence.

This friendship brought Broomy constant anxiety. Sparrow was so droll, so high-spirited, he never could get him seriously to promise anything; he would always seize the comical side of the subject, and would say such ridiculous things that Broomy would laugh, in spite of himself, till the tears ran down his face. He had every reason to hope he had laid aside the habit of drinking, and that the taste for it had died away; but sometimes he was puzzled to know how far he was serious, and so it was not quite without reason he hoped a day would never come when he and Sparrow would be ashamed to meet.

His speculations on this subject were interrupted by the appearance of Joe at the tavern door; and having watched him safely home, Broomy turned in for a last night's rest in the little cart. He was quite sorry to leave it, and to give up the happy free feeling he had so enjoyed whilst roosting under the open sky in this self-chosen little nest. But all things bright or sad end one day; and Broomy lay down to rest that night a happier, braver boy than he had ever been before.

Thus the week passed by, and though he was often near Janet, and was helping her unknown in his nightly watch over Joe, he was so busy that, boy-like, he never thought that she might perchance be wondering at his sudden desertion of the cart. Not



till the evening after Mabel's visit did he make his appearance at the little house. A warm welcome awaited him from his kind friend, and she soon unfolded her plans to him, confident that he would only too gladly fall in with her suggestion. She was therefore surprised to see him shake his head negatively. His cheeks had flushed with pleasure at the proposal; it would have been a very, very happy thing; but his line of duty was now so clearly marked out, he felt he must go forward in it. Mrs. Parker saw at once that he was right, and, though it was a sore disappointment to her, she cheerfully laid aside her own wishes to strengthen and sympathize with him in his new resolutions. He spoke of Alice as being weaker every day, and was proud to tell how much he was able to do for her. He just mentioned, too, his nightly watch over his father; but he did not speak much of that, and was silent altogether of the same service rendered to Joe.

Janet was thoroughly glad to see the boy in a far brighter and more healthy frame of mind, and was thankful that the morbid feelings which had so preyed upon him should be troubling him less. She, in her turn, found in him a willing listener as she detailed the visit of his mother's former charges; and he longed to see Miss Mabel, of whom he had heard so much, and Master Guy, who was so like Master Lionel. "It would do Alice a world of good to see her, I am sure," he said; "and when do you

think she will come, Mrs. Parker?" But Mrs. Parker could not say, though she faithfully promised that, as far as any arrangement of a day depended upon her, it should be as soon as possible. So they chatted on, and Janet drew from Lionel many details of his past life, and gradually discovered how much the boy was already doing to help those with whom he came in contact. She heard all about Sparrow, and little Will, whom his mother had lamed by a cruel blow when he was only two, and who would never walk again without a crutch. He told too of a plan he had for persuading Sparrow to take a place in the store as soon as there should be a vacancy. "I wish you knew them, Mrs. Parker,—and Davy too," he said, wistfully; and then, in answer to her question, Who was Davy? the story of Broomy's third friend came out.

"I've not known him so long—only about six months. I was standing one day near a street stall, when a horse fell down near by, and the driver was thrown off the cab. A crowd collected, of course; and the man who kept the stall went to see. There was a boy about my size came running up to look on, and as soon as he saw the stall he bolted up to it. No one was looking but me, and he could have taken anything he liked as easy as anything. He stood close up to it for a second or two, and then he stretched out his hand towards some cakes. I thought he had got them, when suddenly he

snatched away his hand, and his face got all red, and he looked as though he was going to cry. I thought some one must be looking, but they was all round the horse, and there was no one but me. He didn't wait after that, but dashed off down the street. I was after him in a minute; he looked so sad and starved like, as though he'd had no food for ever so long. I know what that feels like, and as I had just bought my dinner, I thought he might as well have it. He *was* hungry, and he told me he'd never been so near stealing before; only he couldn't earn anything, and didn't know what to do, and it looked so easy to take the cakes. But just as he stretched out his hand, he remembered something his Sunday-school teacher had said long, long ago, and he felt he couldn't.

"He has no parents; and his grandfather, who drinks, had turned him out of house. He'd got an uncle or some one, but he wouldn't have nothing to do with him, because he had quarrelled with his father. Sparrow and I managed to get him some work, and he's promised he won't drink. So after he'd kept on straight some while, I made bold to go and tell his uncle, and he was awful glad to hear he was doing well, and let him go and lodge with him; and now they've got him a place down in the country, so I don't see him often, but he comes up now and then, and I know he's going on all right. I know lots of fellows who aren't half bad, they don't *want* to drink,

they only do it 'cause no one tells them as why they shouldn't. Why, I should think there were twelve of us as never touches it; and we don't smoke neither, and try not to swear."

There was a pathos and sadness about these simple narratives that brought the tears to Janet's eyes. Here were three boys, whose home-life was all ruined by the drink, banded together, not only as friends, but as fellow-enemies to the foe of their country. Davy in the country, Sparrow in the London streets, Broomy in the busy store, all fighting on the side of right against wrong. It is true they were only wild, rough boys, and their sense of right and wrong was not as clearly defined in many things as might be; but on this one point they were all agreed, and unpledged, unaided, they used their influence to stamp out a country's curse and withstand the great evil that is dragging her to ruin. How wide their influence extended, or how many young and old were led from drinking habits by their bright example, these boys never knew. But what they did they did heartily, and their unselfish work will not be forgotten.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SHADOW OF COMING TROUBLES.



ABEL'S account of her visit to Janet Parker and the sad story she had heard of his former coachman had interested and touched Mr. Raine. He placed a sovereign in his daughter's hand, to be spent on behalf of the invalided girl, and promised to do whatever more Mabel should consider advisable when she had seen Alice Franklin herself.

Mr. Raine was a kind, indulgent father. He let his children have much their own way, though at the same time he liked to know what they were about. His dislike of trouble prevented him from checking them in their pursuits, and his boys especially were left to choose their own amusements and form their own friendships. Mabel's influence over Guy prevented him from running into the same danger into which his wild, uncontrolled spirits might have led him; but with Harold, her eldest brother, it was different. He had just completed a brilliant career at school, and was now busily preparing for a com-

petitive examination. Mr. Raine was very proud of his son's abilities, and Mabel and Guy gloried in his repeated successes; but at the same time he cost them more anxiety than either would own to the other. Harold lived a solitary life in the midst of his own family. He had drawn a cloak of reserve around him that repelled the sympathy and affection his sister longed to give him. The large portion of the day he was obliged to devote to study absorbed most of his time, and his somewhat pale cheeks and occasional languor were accounted for by his close application to his work. It is true he was a good deal out, but he chose to go by himself, and no one asked him where he went. At one time Mabel used to try to get him to talk, but his short, irritable answers so frequently drew a sharp reproof from Mr. Raine that she desisted, knowing that it was better to forego all questioning than that any breach should be formed between him and his father.

It was, therefore, with some doubts as to success that Mabel went to Harold's door some ten days after her visit to Janet. A pained look crossed her face as she entered the room. Books were strewn in different places, letters and notes were littered over the table, and a general sense of disorder prevailed; but that was not what troubled her. Standing leaning against the mantelpiece, looking worn and tired, was her brother, smoking. He laughed as he saw her, and threw the end of his cigar into the fire.

"A fellow cannot work on nothing," he said, as he stooped to kiss her. "Any letters this morning?"

"No. But, Harold, you do not look well this morning. I am sure you are working too hard. Your head is quite hot," she added, placing her hand anxiously on his forehead; "won't you lie down?"

"Nonsense, Mabel, I am all right. What a little goose you are," he added, pinching her cheeks. "Don't you think I can take care of myself?"

Mabel certainly did not think so, but as she looked at his tall, graceful figure and his handsome face, she thought she had not noticed before how much older he was growing. Checking further inquiries, seeing they worried him, she turned to the object of her visit; she wanted him to go with her to see Janet. Guy went last time, and she knew what a pleasure it would be to her if he would go. Would he not come, to take care of her?

But Harold declined. He was engaged, he said; and, besides, what did he want to see an old woman for? she did not know him, and he did not care to know her. He spoke crossly, and sat down again to his writing, and Mabel moved to go; but before she left the room she summoned up her courage to speak on a more difficult subject.

"Harold," she said, "I wish you would not smoke. You know father does not like it, and you don't need to, dear."

"What a bother you are, Mabel! It is no affair of

yours whether I choose to have a cigar now and then or not."

She turned to go, and then, as she laid her hand on the door, she looked back. "Harold, for mother's sake I wish you'd leave it off," and then, as he did not answer, she went away.

Her heart was very heavy. It was a constant pain to her that her brother should hold her at such a distance. In vain she tried to break down the barrier that had grown up between them; she never had been able to win his confidence. "Mother would have known how to help him," she thought; "it is so hard alone, and no one seems to understand."

"For mother's sake." The words echoed in Harold's ears as Mabel closed the door, but he turned wilfully from the thought, and wrote to answer a note of invitation his better self told him he had been wiser to refuse. Harold had truly loved his mother, but he had so persistently turned his thoughts from any memory of her that interfered with his own pleasure, that it was only seldom now that her name had power to check him in his pursuits. He had grown strangely selfish for a boy of his age, and had hardened his heart against the affection of those around him. There was one exception, however; and if he was cold to all others, his youngest sister Lilian had secured the warmest place in his heart. The patter of little feet over his head aroused him now, and he hastily opened the window to air the room before



the child should enter. A tiny knock at the door, and she rushed in all life and sunshine.

"Late this morning, Lil," he said, as he stooped to kiss her, and then, as she settled herself on his knees, he put aside his writing to listen to her news.

Eight years old was this little maiden, and a sweeter, fairer little English girl, with rosy cheeks and golden hair, it would have been hard to find. She was a quaint child, with little old-fashioned ways and strange ideas, which afforded constant amusement to her brothers and sisters. Ever since her babyhood she had had a strong attachment to her eldest brother, and when he shrunk from every other, Lilian was always welcome to his room.

Her soft hands stroking his cheeks and gently touching his hair soothed him this morning, for his head was aching terribly, and as he leant back and listened to the endless tales of nursery doings, Mabel's words rang again in his ears, "for mother's sake;" and he thought of her who for one short year had loved so tenderly the little one now sitting on his knee, and how glad she had been to see the love the elder brother bore the tiny child. He checked the feeling, however; and putting her down from his knee, turned again to his writing, while the child, accustomed to his sudden change of mood, settled herself in her own little chair with book and doll.

Mabel found Guy awaiting her in her room. He was in his favourite position, stretched full length on

the hearth-rug. There was no place to which he loved better to bring his story-book or holiday task, and many winter afternoons he passed before her fire whilst she was busy with her writing.

"Mabel, do look at yourself in the glass."

Mabel glanced at the mirror over the mantelpiece, and smiled.

"Have you and Madame been quarrelling? or is there rebellion in the kitchen? or has your own sweet will been crossed, and you want a champion? I declare, Mab, your face is as long as my arm."

"What a boy you are, Guy! Be sensible for a minute, there's a dear fellow; I want to know if you think Harold is ill. He hardly ever comes down to breakfast now till long after we have all done, and he shuts himself up so hard at his work."

Guy's face reflected some of the anxiety depicted upon his sister's, as he replied shortly, "No; don't worry about him, Mabel, he will soon be all right again." He turned the subject, and they were soon busily chatting over plans for helping the Parkers and Franklins. Guy had a suit of clothes he was anxious to bestow on Lionel; and Mabel, seeing how real an interest he took in the boy, hunted out old boots and socks, and made up quite a large parcel, which they thought would do well for Janet's *protégé*.

There was nothing to prevent the visit being paid that afternoon; and Janet, who had listened each day

for horses' feet to stop outside the passage, was truly glad again to welcome the young mistress, as she called her, within her humble dwelling. She was delighted with the clothes for Broomy, but advised their being taken direct to the Black Horse Court, explaining that his roaming days were over, and he was now resident there. Guy listened eagerly to what Mrs. Parker had to tell of Lionel; he conceived a true admiration for a boy who could be so brave and straightforward in a path of such difficulty. He quite longed to see him, and should dearly like to see Sparrow too, he said; they must be plucky little fellows.

It required no little persuasion to get Janet to go with them to see the Franklins: she would far rather walk, she persisted; what was she to go riding through London like a lady? Mabel prevailed, however; and the inhabitants of Black Horse Court were astounded to see a carriage and pair stopping in their neighbourhood, and a young lady and gentleman alighting, and going up the creaking stairs of the very oldest and dirtiest of the houses. Mabel and Guy were sobered and saddened by the squalor and want around them. They knew little of the state of our London poor, and contrasting them with the inhabitants of the pretty cottages at Edgley, their state seemed pitiable indeed.

Alice's pale face flushed with pleasure as she saw who her visitors were. Broomy had prepared her for

the possibility of their coming; so every afternoon, upon the chance of their arrival, she had roused herself to sit up for an hour or two in their mother's large arm-chair. Everything around her was so clean and neat, it offered a great contrast to the glimpse Mabel had had into some of the rooms as she passed upstairs. She felt at once drawn to the suffering girl, who, though so near her own age, had lived a life-time of trial and endurance. Alice could clearly trace in the sweet face of the daughter a strong resemblance to the loved mother, whose memory she treasured so reverently for her own mother's sake; and she found it truly comforting to tell to one so full of sympathy and gentleness the long, sad story of her life. Janet had only given Mabel the bare outline of the Franklins' history, dwelling but briefly upon the sad effects of the drink on Robert; fearing to startle and grieve the young mistress too much. Alice simply and truly detailed the events with which we are already familiar; and as she did so Mabel's heart thrilled with horror that a man could be made so heartless, so brutal, by anything he took of his own free will.

"How could he go on taking it when once he had seen the evil it could do?" Mabel asked, half unconsciously.

"Ah, miss, that is just the hardest part," Alice replied. "When once it takes hold of any one, they have to fight the hardest battle men can ever fight to

rid themselves of it. No one knows the agony and pain they must endure. Oh! it is cruel, cruel; it binds them so easily, holds them so firmly, and makes it so terribly hard for them to break loose."

Alice's warm praises of her brother were a pleasant contrast to the sad central figure of her story; and the joy with which she tried to thank Guy for his present of clothing for Lionel showed how acceptable it was. "I wish you could see him, sir," she said; "but he does not get in till nigh upon six, and it is only when father is out that he can come up to see me then."

Mabel and Guy left the Black Horse Court sadder and wiser than they entered. This first insight into the lives of our London poor impressed them deeply, and as they entered the carriage, the contrast between the ease and luxury of their own position and the want and misery of those around them did not fail to strike them both; and after leaving Janet at her little house, with many thanks for having taken them, they drove home in silence.

Mabel was very thoughtful, Guy strangely restless that evening.

"I may not be in till late," Guy heard Harold say, as he went out of the front door after dinner. A moment's hesitation, and Guy took down his hat and went out too.

Mabel did not know where he was, and was surprised when, an hour later, in answer to her father's

question as to what he was doing, Evie replied that she had seen Guy go out.

"Guy," said his father at breakfast next morning, "you were out late last night."

"Yes, father."

"In future I forbid you to go out alone after dinner during the winter. Harold can take care of himself; you are too young. Do you understand?"

"Yes, father;" and pouring out a strong cup of coffee, he left the room and took it up to Harold.

"You can't go in this morning, Lil," he said, meeting his little sister at the door. "Harold does not want you."

"Harold always wants me," answered the child.

"Does he, darling?" said Guy, putting down the coffee, and catching her up in his arms to settle the matter. "I hope he always may.—Here's a little prisoner, Mabel; keep her safe," and he dropped Lilian into the large easy-chair in Mabel's room, and turned back to Harold.

## CHAPTER X.

### NEW FRIENDS FOR LIONEL.



DECEMBER snows had taken the place of November fogs before Guy had his wish and met his brother's namesake; and then the meeting took place in as unlikely a manner as possible. After her first visit, Mabel tried every week to go and see Alice: Janet had volunteered to accompany her whenever she wished to go, and she gladly availed herself of her companionship, as it afforded her an opportunity of a chat with her old friend. Mabel had long ago discovered the secret of Janet's poverty and sadness, and her heart ached for the kind little woman as she watched her patient, peaceful face, and realized a little of *what* the burden was that she was carrying. Guy often accompanied his sister, and was with her on this particular afternoon, when, for the first time, they saw Lionel Franklin.

A few hours of bright December sunshine had tempted them to undertake the expedition on foot. Mabel often preferred this; she felt that, placed in

the midst of London as she now was, it became her duty to seek to understand the reason of their misery; not to shrink from the knowledge as repulsive, and wish to forget it, but to sympathize with those thus down-trodden, and in some little way to bear with them their heavy burden. So as she trod the muddy streets, she noticed all around, and the same bitter lesson was being forced on her that Broomy had learned outside the Lion public-house. She saw many heart-breaking scenes, and many sad phases of life came before her that touched her deeply and saddened her young spirit; but when she sought the cause of it all, and looked to see the reason of the evil, one answer alone stared her in the face—*the drink*. Poverty, undoubtedly, there may be; but squalor, misery, starvation, these, she saw, need not be: they existed not by God's will, but as the devil's work. Every drinking-house she passed, she felt was one of his dens; every drunken man or woman one of his captives; and with her whole soul she loathed the agent by which he works so gigantic, so awful an evil as that which lies so heavily upon us as a nation.

Thoughts such as these were filling her mind as they turned towards Franklin's house. A smile passed over their faces as a hearty peal of laughter broke upon their ears, and they moved aside to let two boys turning wheels on the muddy pavement pass them. Seeing Janet, the latter of them sprang



to his feet with a merry greeting ; whilst the other, with more speed than manners, made off. "O Mrs. Parker! we were so happy, Sparrow and me, we couldn't help it." Then seeing the young lady and gentleman, he blushed crimson, and lifting his cap, added, "I beg your pardon, miss, I did not see you."

Mabel and Guy instinctively felt that this merry, bright boy was the Lionel Franklin of whom they had lately heard so much. Both were rather taken aback: from having heard so much of Broomy's doings, of his bravery and resolution, they had pictured to themselves a rather grave, downcast boy, with traces of sorrow written on his face, and a shadow of the sad experience of life which he had had apparent in his words and actions. Cart-wheel turning and this picture were sadly at variance; but they felt that the reality was better than the anticipation. At the same time, his face seemed familiar to them, and they both recollected having often seen the boy at work upon his crossing in Errelle Square. They remembered how suddenly they had missed him some weeks ago, and wondered how, when Janet had related his history, they had failed to connect the two.

Broomy also was surprised to recognize in Mabel the young lady for whose coming he had always most constantly watched during the time he swept in Errelle Square; not only because of the never-failing penny, but also because her face was kind, and her gentle

good-morning sounded home-like to the lonely boy. Flushed with his play, he did indeed look a "bonnie laddie;" and Janet might well feel as proud as she did of her young *protégé*.

Lionel turned at once to accompany the visitors upstairs, and to prepare Alice for their coming. He was bashful and subdued in the presence of Miss Raine; but his face flushed with pleasure as he heard her speak gently and affectionately of his mother, and he felt ready to do anything for one so sweet and good, who had known her and had shown such true kindness to Alice.

Janet soon drew from Broomy the reason why he and his little friend had been "so happy." Ever since he had entered the provision warehouse, he had been hoping to get Sparrow a place there too, and it always seemed as though there would never be a vacancy. He had persuaded him to go as a paper-boy whilst waiting, and to try and earn a character so. Now, at last, not only was there a vacant place, but upon applying for it Sparrow had been almost at once admitted, and was to begin work there to-morrow.

"He won't half like it at first," said Broomy, "it is such a change from street life; but he will be in my shed, and it will be ever and ever so much better for him; and, besides, it will save me from being for ever a-running round to St. Ann's Court to see how they are getting on."

Boys are always shy of one another at first, especi-

ally when nearly the same age, and in different ranks of society. Thus it came to pass that throughout this interview Guy and Broomy did not exchange a single word. They were both thinking about each other, however, and making mental observations. "So you are Master Lionel's brother, and mother took care of you when you were small. I wonder how much you are like him," was the uppermost thought in Broomy's mind; while Guy was trying hard to convince himself that this really was the boy of whom he had heard so much, but whom he had pictured so differently. "I thought I knew you, from all I had heard," he said to himself, "but it appears I don't; and yet you are the fellow who has helped me more than any one to do the most difficult thing I have ever done in my life."

Mabel was much pleased with Lionel, and as they left the house expressed herself warmly in his praise. She had arranged that he should come up to Errelle Square the following evening to fetch some books she had promised Alice, and she hoped thus to get to know the boy, and to learn from him some definite way in which she could help him and his sister.

Punctual to the appointment, Broomy appeared at Mr. Raine's house shortly after half-past seven, and was soon standing in Mabel's presence in a small ante-room that opened out of the dining-room. The boy had taken pains to make himself as clean and tidy as he could; and dressed in Guy's old suit, with

white collar and well-blacked boots, he certainly looked very respectable. His shyness soon wore off, and though perfectly respectful, he spoke freely and frankly to Mabel of his past and present history. He found it easy to speak to her of the sadder and more difficult parts of his life; she so cared to hear, and was so anxious to help him on in any way, that he felt he might look to her for advice in his difficulties. She spoke a little to him of his father as she remembered him in the old days, and expressed her wish to see him again.

Broomy shook his head. "You'd better not, miss," he said; "you wouldn't know him again. It is that," he went on, pointing through the half-open door to where the decanters on the dinner-table were visible,—"it's just that and nothing else that has ruined him. It doesn't seem as though any one could stand against it. I've known dozens and dozens of fellows come up from the country like father; they never thought of taking more than their pint or two pints of ale a day, and then, before they've been in London a year, they are worse than anybody. It just grows on them they don't know how—no one knows how—till it gives them such a craving and a thirst that they can't keep away from it. There's Joe Parker, he's every bit as bad as father now, and they say he was such a fine fellow before he took to drinking. The only thing is to keep clear of it altogether. I can't tell but if I took a little I mightn't in a year be

taking more, and go on and on till I got just like father. I don't believe any one can stand against it as long as they take any—at least they are never safe. Why, I've known little bits of boys, ever so much smaller than me, who'd got to care for a glass of spirits more than anything else in the world."

Mabel felt half ashamed of the wine upon the dinner-table, and wished the boy had not noticed it. "But he must see," she reflected, "that it is different for us; we know how to take a small quantity and stop there." She was intensely interested to hear Lionel talk thus, and knowing he was speaking out of his heart, and telling only the true and bitter things he had learned by a life spent in the midst of the saddest scenes, she encouraged him to go on.

"But *every one* does not give way," she said; "surely there are some steady men among those whom you know?"

"Yes," he replied, "there are, but not many. Down at the store I don't believe there are more than six, and we have to stand any amount of chaff. At the mews I don't think there's any one but what drinks; and in our court I know all the men do, and the women mostly do. You see, miss, if a fellow does anything for another fellow, the only way he can return it is to treat him at the public; and if they wants to see one another, they must go there: there's just everything to draw them to it, and nothing to make it look nice to keep away. Then the gentle-

folk don't help us. They give the coachman a tip 'to get a drink with,' and seem to think that is being kind. I can't make it out, miss; they must see that it's the drink that ruins us, and yet they don't seem to want to take it away. I wish some one would make a law to shut up all the gin-palaces. I should think the Queen would if she knew," said Broomy pitifully.

Mabel smiled at his impracticable idea; but seeing how much he was in earnest, she said,—

"I am afraid that cannot be, Lionel; and, besides, I think such a reformation must begin with the men themselves—they might give it up of their own accord."

Again Broomy shook his head; Miss Mabel did not know much of London life, he thought.

"Oh, miss," he said, "you don't know. They do all they can to make it comfortable for them in those places. The landlord gets to be their friend, and lets them run on a long bill when they are short. It's always bright and warm in there, and there are lots of fellows they know, and they talk politics and get to be known and expected there. Then if a fellow gives it up, he's left all alone. He loses his friends, loses the only place he has in which to spend his evenings, everybody gives him the cold shoulder. People call him stingy; and if he is ill or gets into trouble, no one comes to see after him, and there is no collection for him like there would have been if he'd

kept on with his set. Why, I know once when one of father's mates was ill they sent a hat round for him at the Lion and got two pound straight off. It is not only to give up the drink—that's hard enough—but there is all the rest as well."

"I wonder, then," said Mabel, "that they do not take a little, without going on to too much; then they could keep their friends and enjoy pleasant society in a rational manner."

"It's them people I can't bear," said the boy, almost forgetting his manners, and speaking vehemently. "They say to a poor fellow who wants to give it up, Now, I can take a little and never be any the worse for it; why don't you? Then he tries, but they drug it, and put salt in it and all sorts of things to make him want more. *He* can't keep to the one glass; and then he goes and makes himself worse than ever he was before, because he leaves off to care for himself and feels it is no good to try. There seems no in-between now with us poor folk; either we drink and make ourselves worse than the animals, or we keep clear of it altogether and do as best we can. They say it is not so with the gentlefolk, but I know I see lots of them tipsy, young gentlemen no bigger than your brother; but then, of course, they have good things to drink, not drugged like ours. But I think it pretty well touches everybody, high and low. Mrs. Parker and me, we sometimes say we don't see what it's all coming to; and so few seem to care to help."

"Lionel," said Mabel, as the boy stopped and flushed up to find how vigorously he had been talking, "I wonder how you have learned all this."

"Why, miss, I am about all day, and can't help noticing. I am always in and out of the courts and places, and I know all our boys' homes; and if that isn't enough to show what drink leads to, I don't know what is. They are not fit places for such as you to go to. I don't think you'd believe people could live there, but they do, 'cause they must."

Mabel felt that Broomy had given her enough to think of for that night, so after a few more words she gave him the promised books for Alice and sent him away.

It was a long time since Broomy had passed the spot where he formerly spent his days, and he stopped as he came to what was once his crossing, and wondered who swept it now. The tall form of a policeman nearing that corner of the square reminded him of that November day when, at his first knowledge of the possibility of losing Alice, he had wept so bitterly, hidden, as he thought, by the November fog. He watched the advancing figure, and remembering how kind a friend he had proved in the past, he determined to speak to him should he prove to be Policeman B. He it was, and in answer to Broomy's good-evening, greeted him warmly.

"Well, my lad, and where have you been all this time? I have missed you from your crossing. Why,



I declare, if you have been busy at nothing else, you have been at work growing; why, you look a good inch taller."

Broomy was delighted to hear that such was his opinion, and avoiding any allusion to their last meeting, or rather parting, chatted briskly to the kind man as he walked by his side.

"Yes, I know her well by sight," he replied, in answer to Broomy's inquiry if he knew Miss Raine; "and I am glad for you that you have found a friend in her, for a kinder young lady I have never watched treading the streets. Shake hands, my lad, and good-night; it is late for you to be out. You must come and see me again."

Policeman B was unfeignedly glad to find the boy doing so well. He had often thought of him, and had feared it might be for no good reason he had deserted his crossing so long, and also he had missed his bright face. It was, therefore, both a pleasure and a comfort to the good man to see the lad again, and to hear from him the reason for his change of occupation. "He's pulling the right way, I feel sure," he said; "but there may be a time when he'll be glad of a friend. I shall try still and keep my eye on him."

## CHAPTER XI.

"STRAIGHT IS THE LINE OF DUTY."

**M**ABEL was glad when bed-time came that night. Her talk with Lionel had given her such a new insight into the nature of the woes of our city poor, that she longed for a quiet time to think it all over. She saw at once that she had hitherto laid too much stress upon the distinction of classes; she had considered the trials and temptations of the one as too distinct from those affecting the other. Broomy's words had shown her that, as common sufferers from this evil, they were all one. It appeared to be spreading like a life-sapping disease through every grade of society, and it became a common duty to band together in fierce struggle against this terrible foe, the drink.

"I don't believe any one can stand against it," Broomy had said; and as she listened to his account of its alluring influence, ever drawing its victims on from little to more, she felt that he was right. Might not her own cousins, her own brothers even, fall beneath this terrible power? The thought was heart-

rending, but Mabel felt she must face it. She had determined, by God's help, to think over the subject fairly and truly, and to make up her mind as to what was her duty henceforward. "But I am beginning at the wrong end," she said. "I must see what this says first, and then afterwards put by the side of that what I have seen this winter and what I have heard to-night." Mabel opened her Bible, and thoughtfully and prayerfully looked out the passages bearing upon the subject; then putting them all together, she read them over. She had never known before how much there was about it in the Bible. All the depths of misery and sin to which drinking habits can lead, she found plainly set before the reader of God's Word, and solemn warnings of its alluring and dangerous nature are repeatedly given. "Woe to him that giveth his neighbour drink!" "It biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder;" "It taketh away the heart." Nothing could be truer and nothing plainer; it was just as she felt now. What to her was harmless and pleasant, what she had always taken as a matter of course without doubt or fear, was to others death, and worse than death. Unable as Mabel was to turn to any friend for advice in the matter, she felt so glad the path it would be her duty to follow was so plainly put before her in the New Testament. There seemed no doubt about it at all. There was no direct command; that she did not expect. God had made the vines and hops to grow;

it was only man's bad use of them that had turned a blessing into a curse. But when it says so plainly, "Destroy him not with thy meat for whom Christ died," Mabel felt there was no further doubt or uncertainty in the matter. Thousands and thousands of drunkards are yearly descending to an early grave, murdered by the drink; and was it for her to use lightly a thing that worked such awful woe? No, indeed; but rather, sorrowing that she had so long overlooked this duty, humbly to seek, by thus bearing with her brethren the burden they had laid on their own shoulders, to become fit to help to raise again some who had so fallen. "I have no right to say a word to Franklin or to Parker while I take it myself," she said; "it would be trying to pull out the mote from their eye while the beam is in my own all the time. St. Paul says, 'It is *good* neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.' With such plain verses as these, I do not think I can be making a mistake."

Then arose the thought, What will this entail? A little chaffing from the boys, a few sharp words from Aunt Caroline, a question, perhaps, from her father, and then she would be let to have her own way at home. But when she visited her relations, or went out in the evening, that would be the most difficult. The sense of shame and humiliation that she knew would arise at the half-laughing question, "Have you

turned teetotaler, Mabel?" would be hard at first. Then, too, without doubt it was giving up something it was pleasant to take: claret-cup was nice, and so was champagne, and many other things to which she was daily accustomed. But it would be hardly worth doing anything if there was nothing to give up; and it was so little in comparison to what these poor men who are the slaves of drink must go through before they can shake it off. "Anyway I shall be fighting with and not against them, as I felt I was doing when Lionel was talking to-night."

She rose, feeling that the matter was settled; but dropping into the chair again, she opened her writing-table. "I ought to make a real promise to show I mean it," she said. "What shall I put? 'I, Mabel Raine, do hereby promise—' No, I think that is too formal. I will write down that text on the blank leaf at the end of my Bible, and sign my name underneath." So she wrote it out, and added underneath,—

"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth."

"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

"For even Christ pleased not himself."

And then she signed it underneath—"Mabel Raine"—and dated it. That was Mabel's first pledge, and it was neither formed nor signed without earnest prayer to God, that if this was his will for her to do,

he would strengthen her in it. Two lines had been running in her head all that evening,—

"He stooped to shame and trial, peace on earth to make;  
Shall I no self-denial show for His dear sake?"

And as she hummed them to herself, she added two more,—

"On then for God and duty, with the prize in view;  
Safe to the home of beauty He will bring me through."

And she felt how much happier it was to feel decided and sure than uncertain and hesitating.

Mabel's new resolutions were soon to be tested by plenty of boyish chaff. Guy certainly was a terrible tease, and being remarkably observant, he did not fail to notice Mabel's quiet "No, thank you," when James as usual brought the wine round at dinner.

"Father," he began, a few days after, at dinner-time, "what is a teetotaler?"

"One of a deluded set of people who say it is wrong not only to drink, but even to touch or look at wine," said Harold, dryly.

"Harold is nearly right," said Mr. Raine; "they make themselves most obnoxious through pressing their ideas and trying to back them up with arguments even a child could contradict."

Mabel flushed uneasily, and did not dare look up, as she knew Guy's eyes were fixed on her.

"Aunt Caroline," pursued the boy, "what do you think of them? I was reading a book about them to-day, so you see I am up in the subject."

"They are very vulgar people," replied Miss Raine; "only, quite of the lower orders. I believe they wear green and red bands across their shoulders."

"Ah, indeed!—Mabel, that is rather a pretty mixture, green and red," said Guy, now directly addressing his sister.

Mabel was getting more and more uncomfortable and hot; she did wish Guy wouldn't, and tried in vain to change the subject. But it was no good; Guy had been cross all day, and was now taking his revenge in any way he could.

"Aunt Caroline," he said presently, "would you pass the claret? Mabel has none."

"Not to-day, Guy dear; I don't want any."

"Not to-day, not yesterday, nor the day before? That won't do, Miss Mabel."

"Guy, I wish you would leave me alone. I need not take wine unless I like."

"Hoity-toity! you are very warm on the subject, but you must submit. I am going to be a doctor, you know, and I hereby prescribe my first prescription, that Miss Mabel Raine take three glasses daily of such wine as shall prove an effectual antidote to teetotalism."

"Guy, don't tease your sister so," said Mr. Raine; and the boy, seeing that at last he had really vexed Mabel, desisted.

Their aunt, however, had taken in the idea, and began in her hesitating way to speak to Mabel on

the subject; but receiving a firm and decided answer from her niece, felt herself nonplussed, and appealed to Mr. Raine.

"Harry," she said, "I wish you would speak to Mabel; she has got some idea or other into her head about not taking wine, and I am sure she needs it."

"Mabel, what is this?" said Mr. Raine, worried by his sister's interference.

"Father dear, you really need not trouble. It is only that I do not wish for any wine, and Aunt Caroline and Guy both wish me to take some."

"Leave her alone, Caroline," said Mr. Raine, rather testily; "she is not a child now, and I think she can look after herself."

Miss Raine subsided, as she always did when her brother spoke so. But though silenced for the minute, she did not forget to watch Mabel, and her constant pressing and persuading were a sore trial to the girl's temper. She determined at last just to tell her father plainly what she thought, and then it would all be right. It was an effort to her, but she felt it must be made; so one night she lingered behind after they had all gone up to bed, and told her tale. He listened to what she had to say, and though he hardly saw the reason for her course of action, he felt she was very much in earnest and truly wishing to do what was right; so kissing her affectionately, he told her he was glad she should please herself, and



promised to tell Aunt Caroline not to interfere. Mabel's way was easier now; and though Harold persisted in saying disagreeable things occasionally, the first difficulties being over, she was allowed to do much as she liked uncriticised.

Nothing made Guy so cross as really to have vexed Mabel; so after the battle at dinner-time, when she first felt that she must take a decided position, he had shown his penitence by never mentioning the subject in public again. He thought it over a good deal by himself, however; and coming to Mabel's room one afternoon a few days before Christmas, he flung himself down before the fire, and began to talk to her about it.

"I say, Mab," he began, "I cannot think what you are up to. You surely do not think that by taking nothing yourself you can keep men like Parker and Franklin from getting tipsy."

"No, Guy, I only wish I could; but I do feel sure that so long as I take anything of that sort, I am not only pleasing myself with what ruins them, but also I am doing away with any influence or any right I might have to help them to give it up. Why, just think, Guy, if Lionel and that little boy Sparrow had what you and I have every day they might have got the taste for the drink by this time, and be following the same road along which Robert and Joe have gone to such ruin."

"Hum," said Guy, meditatively, "that's it, is it? I

don't make out how you have got the arguments to fit, but it seems pretty correct, though."

"Seeing all one cannot help seeing in these London streets first made me think; and then hearing that boy talk the other night,—you should have been there, Guy."

"I did hear most. I was in the dining-room, and felt inclined to smash all the decanters, I can tell you."

"That was what made me sure it was right," said Mabel, opening her Bible, and handing it to him to read her promise.

Guy read it over very gravely, and then handing it back he said,—

"Mabel, I am awfully sorry I teased you. I did not know you were in earnest; I only thought you were trying an experiment."

"Never mind, Guy. I am glad you did now; it made me feel quite sure I meant to do it. I am afraid I was rather cross," and she held out her hand.

Guy and Mabel had an odd habit of shaking hands whenever they said anything particular to each other, and on many similar occasions. They were always laughed at for it, but they never gave it up; and as Guy went in and out Mabel always looked for that quaint little shake, and knew something was wrong if she did not get it. Long years after, when Mabel was in a home of her own, and Guy was treading alone his self-chosen path of life in London,

he wrote to his sister: "There are many, many things I miss, and much I often long for, but nothing so much as a little soft hand that always sped me well or welcomed me gladly in the old home-life."

"It is bad for a boy to be always kissing," Mabel would say when her aunts and cousins teased her; "and we must show each other in some way that we are glad or sorry, or that we understand." And so the habit begun in the nursery followed them through life.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CHRISTMAS EVE.

**R**IGHT winter weather set in with Christmas week, and among the many preparing for the happy day the young people at Errelle Square were not the least busy.

For them it was never a very joyous season, as it was at Christmas time that Mrs. Raine had died; but they sought all the more that through them gladness should be brought to many homes. The whole house seemed alive with preparations, and busy feet were running up and down the stairs carrying things to the morning-room, which seemed the rallying point. Large piles of knitted clothing of every description from Aunt Caroline, baby clothes and pretty little shawls and ties from Mabel, dolls and balls from Evelyn and Lilian, were lying in readiness about the room; while the kind donors were busy directing and packing the different parcels into two large boxes over which Guy presided hammer in hand.


"What memories you two have!" said Guy as he

examined the directions. "Mabel, I believe you know the name of every baby in Edgley,—poor little sprats! I suppose the ones we knew are men and women now, like our little lady there," he added, pouncing upon Lilian and riding her round the room on his shoulder.—"I wonder what it all looks like now, Lil? I should think they had got a neat little public-house where the old pump stood, and had called it the 'Raine Arms.' We will go marching down there together one of these days, and I will give them a rattling good temperance lecture; you shall start the tunes, and I'll do the talking. I will take the sign-board for my text, and tell them I hope they *will* all arm themselves with rain—nothing drives the thirst away so effectually; and then we will set to and chase the landlord, and we will make him run and run and run till he runs himself away and never appears no more. Then they will all become good teetotalers like me, and with three cheers will acknowledge that I have a right to reign. Don't pinch, Lil; it wasn't a pun. There, I have confided to you the aim of my life, and it is a secret. I must be off, Mabel wants me; and if you don't know what teetotal means, you had better ask Madame, or look it out in the dictionary,"—advice which was taken more literally than was meant.

Mabel had the strongest affection for her old home at Edgley. She was always hoping that her father would resettle there; and through constant corre-

spondence with some of the old servants now settled upon the estate, she kept up an untiring interest in all her father's tenants, though she had never revisited it since their hurried departure on account of their mother's illness. The despatching of the Christmas box to Edgley became a matter of family interest, and it was Mr. Raine's express wish that not one of his tenants should be forgotten; and thus, in a large gathering yearly held in the village school, every man, woman, and child received some substantial token that they were not forgotten by their former master and his family. Laune had been sold, but still the old friends there were remembered; and unexpected parcels gladdened many a heart on Christmas eve.

Busy as Mabel was in thus caring for those at a distance, her London friends were not forgotten. A warm overcoat for Joe, a soft shawl for Janet, together with little parcels of tea and sugar, were left at the little house on Christmas eve; while Broomy was summoned to carry from Errelle Square such quantities of things, it never seemed as though he could say "Thank you" enough times to show how much he meant it. There were soft wraps and a dress for Alice, a coat for Robert, such as he had not had since brighter days had passed, a suit complete, including boots and hat, for Lionel, and books and pictures for them all. Then further, there were materials for such a plum-pudding, Broomy thought

they would never be able to eat it all, and Mabel explained that she did not wish them to do so. She wanted Alice to make two puddings, and one was to be taken by Broomy himself to his little friends in St. Ann's Court. It was such kind thoughtfulness, Lionel could not express how much he thanked her. Then  came in, and after a little fumbling in his pocket, he produced two first-rate knives—one for Lionel, and one for his friend. Broomy's heart overflowed with gladness; it seemed so wonderful to be so happy, when only two months ago there seemed so much trouble in the world he wished he could die and go away.

As he walked away a plan began to form itself in his head, one he had dreamed of and thought impossible, but which now seemed put within his reach. He whistled brightly as he carried home the things, and having examined them all with Alice and enjoyed her delight at each new gift, he left the house to go to Janet and ask her advice upon his project. She had just opened Mabel's kind present, and was putting Joe's coat where it should be the first thing to meet his eyes at his home-coming, when Broomy's step gladdened her heart. If she had had a child of her own, Janet could hardly have loved him more than she did this boy; and he gave her back such warm affection and such trustful confidence, it was a very happy friendship. He caused her anxiety at times: there was a wilfulness and stubbornness that grieved

her in his manner; but he was always so sorry afterwards, and tried so hard not to let it conquer him, she knew in the end it would be subdued, and he was so earnest and so sincere in everything he did, that it was a great pleasure to her to be his friend.

He was glad to find Janet so happy with Mabel's gifts, and after having admired them, he settled down in "his corner" by the fire and began to pour out his tale. He first told of the Christmas pudding Alice was to make for them all at home, and then of the one that Mabel's kind forethought had provided for the little Bakers.

"I don't believe they've ever tasted such a thing," he said. "But then, Mrs. Parker, such lots haven't. I was thinking over our boys as I walked home, and I don't believe there's hardly one of them as will have a nice day to-morrow, leastways I'm sure there isn't, and I was wishing Sparrow and I could give them a tea, and have a regular good afternoon. So I thought Miss Raine wouldn't mind if instead of only making a little pudding for the Bakers, *we* was to have the little one and let them have the big, and then Sparrow and me could ask all them other fellows to come and have a bit too. I know there'd be room in St. Ann's Court. They have the top attic, and nobody else lives in it particular, except an old man, and he's out most days. There's nothing much in the room but a long table, which can't never be taken away, because the stairs are too narrow; and



it *would* be fine. Don't you think we might do it, Mrs. Parker?"

Janet entered into the plan at once with her whole-hearted sympathy. All that she could do to forward it she was willing to undertake. She would come round herself and help Alice to make the pudding: it was only four o'clock then—Joe was sure not to be in till six: if he was going home she would walk round with him then. So soon they were walking along together, deeply engrossed in considering necessary arrangements for the grand *fête*. Broomy had saved two shillings on purpose to buy cake and oranges. Janet volunteered to make coffee if Broomy would send to fetch it round, and she would like to supply some little pies and tarts as well; so all seemed favouring his plan, and Alice proved willing to do her part.

He waited to see the two fairly at work; and having done all that lay in his power to aid and ease their exertions, he rushed off to find Sparrow. Broomy was excited, and feeling exercise the only congenial thing, he sped headlong up the Tottenham Court Road, through Bozier's Court, along Oxford Street, and was only brought to a full stop when, as he turned the last corner, he rushed full tilt into some one, and he and Sparrow went flying over each other into the centre gutter of St. Ann's Court.

"Now, there's a way to treat a feller! ain't you got no better manners than that, Mr. Franklin?" said

Charlie, as laughing and out of breath they scrambled to their feet. But he wondered no more at Broomy's hurry when he unfolded his plan.

"O you brick, you downright brick!" he cried. "Why, it will be the very finest day in my life; and won't the brats be pleased? I was just going out to get some buns and nuts to make it something of a day for them."

"I want Will," said Broomy; "he and Kit must go round and help to make the pudding, while we take the invitations. But first we must survey our dining-hall. Come up, old fellow, and let's have a look round."

"Table's big enough; three chairs—rather short sitting accommodation—four boxes capable of holding six, three mugs, two plates, one fork. Any dishes? No. Glasses? None either. Well, we'll manage somehow. Now that we know what we have to work with we can set to; but first, the brats must be taken round."

Broomy was an immense favourite with Will; he so pitied the little lad, lamed by his own mother's hand in a drunken passion, and condemned to pass his whole life deformed and suffering, and had completely won the child's heart by his gentle, tender manner towards him. Frequently on a Sunday evening they might be seen together in the park; and many a little cake or tiny toy found its way to gladden the days of this sad little life. Kit was also

sadly delicate, and some of the women in the court said he was not "all there;" but he had sense enough to take care of Will, and though he never spoke much, and spent most of his days quietly nursing a rag doll, he could understand quickly enough what Will wanted, and was never tired of running his errands. "The brats," as Sparrow always called them, were rather a heavy care for one so young, and he felt them to be so. "If it weren't for them," he would say to Broomy, "I would not stay in London a day longer. Why, I could go to sea, and do lots and lots of things; I don't know what I might not be by this time." And Broomy sympathized, though privately he thought it a good thing for Sparrow to have something so definite to bind him to a settled life. He was very fond of his little brothers too; and though it was hard work to support them on eight shillings a week, somehow or other he managed it.

Such a stamping and scrambling up the shaky staircase considerably surprised Janet and Alice in the midst of their preparations, and when the door opened, and they saw what an army of helpers Broomy had brought, they almost feared they might prove hinderers. The elder boys announced, however, that they were off again immediately; and they had no sooner established the younger ones, than they dashed downstairs and started off, full of spirits, to invite their friends. Little Kit and Will really proved themselves quite useful, and their pale faces glowed

with the pleasure of watching and helping. They were no strangers to Alice: often, as Broomy was bringing home his young charges from their evening walks, he would take them round to see his sister, and many of the neat patches that held their ragged clothes together were done by her nimble fingers.

The pudding had been fairly mixed and stirred before Janet and her young friend parted with mutual wishes for much happiness upon the following day; though each knew how unlikely it was, and how difficult these seasons of national holiday-making are to those whose homes are ruined by drink.

The two boy-friends returned from their expedition shortly after, highly delighted with their success. All their friends, ten in number, had promised to come, and to be at Charlie's room punctually at three the following afternoon. So, unknown to herself, Mabel sent fourteen happy hearts to rest that night, looking for a brighter Christmas than life had brought them yet.

Strange though it may seem, Alice had not yet mentioned to her father the visits that she had received from Miss Raine. She had seen little of him the last few weeks, and she feared how angry it might make him to feel that the daughter of his former master should know the sad details of his wife's death and of his present life. Now, however, the time was come when she could keep it back no longer; and when the bright boys had left, and quiet reigned

in the little attic, she lay back in the old easy-chair and thought how best to tell him. Her heart was very heavy that evening; life seemed so lonely, and yet it was wrong to repine when she had so much to be thankful for. She had only to think of all the kind friends who had appeared within the last two months, to recognize a greater than any human care watching over her and her brother. She wondered now what she had done without them. Then Broomy was going on so well—that was a great thing to be thankful for; he kept on so bravely and perseveringly with his nightly watch over his father, and was such a comfort to her in helping and cleaning, she felt she could not thank God enough for thus caring for the boy. Still, in spite of all this, there was a weight on Alice's heart. It seemed so long since her mother went away, so long since she had heard her sweet voice and felt her gentle touch, and she did want it so terribly sometimes. Then for her father she grieved sorely; he did not seem to get any better. And yet she *did* try, and she *did* pray, but it all appeared to be no good.

She had opened her Bible, but she did not seem able to read, she felt so lonely and desolate. Tears came to her relief, and then as the hour grew late she became drowsy; and thus it came to pass that when Robert Franklin opened the door shortly after nine o'clock, he found his daughter sleeping. The sight struck him, and he stood still, looking at her. She

looked so like her mother, but so white and ill he almost held his breath to catch the sound of her breathing. Then as he glanced from her around the little room, almost for the first time he realized something of the sad, lonely life she was leading. All the cooking utensils had been tidily put away, the curtains were drawn across the window, a bunch of holly was hung over the mantle-shelf, while the fire burning cheerily below threw a bright glow over all; and there in the midst of it lay the sleeping girl. Robert had once been a man of sensitive, impulsive feelings, and though they had been blunted by his late manner of life, they had by no means passed from him altogether. "And she does it all for me," was the thought that arose in his mind as he looked from his daughter to the tokens of her care; and his conscience answered him with the bitter question, What did he for her?

Alice awoke under this prolonged gaze, and seeming hardly able to collect her thoughts, looked around her bewildered. Then catching sight of her father, she held out her hand with the bright smile with which she always greeted him.

"O father," she said, "I was just dreaming of you."

He stooped and kissed her; and then as her face flushed with pleasure at this unusual display of affection, she motioned him to sit down by her side while she talked to him a little.

"I dreamt we were back at Edgley," she continued, "and mother was looking like she used to; and the

fields were all green, and the roses out, and we felt so happy, father. Then, as we were all enjoying it so, it faded and faded away, and this came instead, and all the noise, and the crying, and the scolding,—oh, it seemed such a change! And as we were standing wondering, the door opened, and Mrs. Raine came in, and she held out her hands to mother and me, and said we must not stay here, we should spoil our white dresses; and when we looked we saw we were clothed in white, and so we followed her away. We were glad to go where it should be bright and clean, but we did not want to leave you; and when she saw we were troubled, she looked back to where Lennie and Miss Mabel were standing, and told them to bring you safely after us. And then I looked up and saw you, father, and I was so glad to be with you still.”

There was silence as she paused, but she felt that her father had been listening, so summoning up her courage, she told him of Miss Raine’s visits, and of her kind Christmas presents. He was very much gratified with the coat, though he was not altogether pleased to find that his former master should have become acquainted with his present circumstances. Alice’s words, however, had aroused his better nature; and a growing conviction, as he looked at her, that before long she would join that sweet young mother, made him gentle, almost tender with her that Christmas eve.

"And, father, I have something to ask you, and you will say Yes," she continued.

"Well, birdie, what is it?" he asked, unable to resist her pleading face, and the old pet name rising unbidden to his lips.

"It is something I have asked before, and you have always said, 'No,' but you won't this time, father; for I don't think I shall ever ask again. It is Christmas eve, father, and people always feel happy then and there is only one thing I want now—I have longed for it so often—and that is the little key to unlock mother's box."

He opened his lips to say "No;" but the tears that had gathered in her bright eyes, the flush on her pale cheeks, and the eager look with which she waited, stopped him. He seemed to see the mother's face in that of the daughter, and a sort of feeling that Edith was really near, watching him, broke his resolution, and he placed in his child's hand the key for which she had pleaded so long. She lifted up her face and kissed him, and then sank back with such a contented look, he wondered to see it. They were both silent again for some time. Alice was looking at the little key, handling it fondly, and promising herself a great Christmas treat in opening the long-closed box; and more than for herself, she rejoiced for Lionel's sake.

Her father rose abruptly in a few minutes, and made towards the door. The movement roused the



girl from her thoughts, and stretching out her hand towards him, she cried,—

“Not to-night, O father; you must not go to-night. It is Christmas eve,” she added, shivering, “and I can’t be left alone. I feel so strange, O father!” and the girl sank back in her chair almost fainting.

Seeing she was really not herself, Franklin turned back, and lifting her gently into her own room, hoped she would fall asleep. This she could not do, however; but holding him tightly by the hand, intreated him to talk to her.

“Tell me about mother,” she said; “about the time when we were happy. I want to forget the in-betweens, and only to think of what was then, and what will be by-and-by.”

Franklin was sadly perplexed. He would have called in Mrs. Markham had he been able to get at her; but Alice would not release his hand, and seeing his touch seemed to soothe and comfort her, he sat still by her side. She talked to herself in an excited way now and then, and the father learned from those broken sentences more of the effects of his own selfish life than ever he had known before. He saw his own daughter patiently considering and attending to him in every way—stinting herself that he might have enough. His own boy, too, whom he had driven from his home, gave back good for evil, and watched and waited for him night after night with a sickening

hopelessness, but an undaunted perseverance. Two bright lives had been given him to care for; how had he guarded this treasure? It was his own figure that threw that deep black shadow that had darkened their young days, his own selfishness that had kept them poverty-stricken and comfortless, his own sin that had broken their mother's heart and left them worse than orphans.

All this Robert Franklin acknowledged as he watched for sleep to calm and rest his child, and tears trickled down his wan, colourless cheeks as he thought of Christmas eves in days now past recalling. But the taste for drink had too strong hold upon him still for him to do more than acknowledge his wrong; he had almost lost the power to make a resolution. So, as the morning dawned, and Alice fell into a quiet slumber, he yielded to the cruel thirst that came over him. "Only once more," he said to himself, "and then he would try." But it was all that was left to him, all that comforted and did not accuse him; and with a wild look in his haggard eye he crept out in the cold and the darkness to that fatal "once more" at his old haunt, the Lion. Already bells were ringing for early service at different churches in the neighbourhood; and passers-by were greeting one another with friendly wishes, their voices sounding cheerily through the clear frosty air. But for Robert Franklin there was no kind wish from any friend, no hand to stay his downward course; only a cruel

agonizing thirst drawing him on to what in the end could only prove his death. .

So he passed his Christmas day, and so did thousands and thousands of his fellow-men. While the message of good tidings sounded out in the churches and cathedrals of our land, while thousands listened with willing ears and thankful hearts to the good news, and returned to their homes bearing with them a sense of that "peace" and that "good will," double, nay, treble the number spent the day in a vain effort for all they knew of joy, and failing to find it, turned in hopeless despair to that which, though it might not satisfy, at all events lulled the restless longing.

"It's Christmas, and we want to be happy, but we don't know how," was the answer given to a kind passer-by, who, attracted by a group of doleful little faces, asked the reason of their sad looks; and it is that wish "to be happy" that makes our national holidays such sad seasons of drunkenness and misery. There is a longing to make the most of these little respites in the struggle for existence, a craving for light-heartedness and for joy; but they do "not know the way," and there are so few to help them, so few who will take the trouble to make these poor fellow-creatures happy. So they choose their own way, and, unguided, wander on into depths of misery and sin, seeking they know not what, and finding in the end that "it stingeth like a serpent, and biteth as an adder."

A gentle knock at the door roused Alice shortly after eight, and Mrs. Parker's bright motherly face, bending over her with an anxious look, was a welcome sight, as she began to remember the events of the night before. She glanced round, and then into the further room for her father, and failing to see him, burst into tears.

Janet was becoming seriously alarmed; Alice looked so much paler and weaker than she had yet seen her, and this uncalled-for emotion from the usually reserved girl betokened some great trouble.

"Oh, Mrs. Parker," she sobbed, "I don't think I can live any longer. He was here last night, and he kissed me and called me by his old pet name for me, and I had got his hand tight, so tight when I went to sleep; and now he's gone. It is Christmas day, too, and I wanted him to have it happy at home. What would mother say? It is just breaking my heart. Oh, why did not some one stop him?"

"Hush, lassie, hush!" said Mrs. Parker soothingly, seeing the girl was really ill; and sitting by her, with gentle words and loving caresses she managed to quiet her. Janet felt thankful that she had come in when she did. Her intention had been merely to put the puddings on to boil, and to go straight home again; but finding her young friend in such a weak, excitable state, she felt it her duty to remain with her.

Alice was still holding the little key tight in her

hand ; and as she remembered it, and told Janet how she had got it, she brightened up a little again, and was glad to take the hot cup of tea her friend soon brought to her bedside.

"Any way, Lennie will have a happy day. I must get up and see about the pudding and things," she said.

In vain Janet tried to persuade her to lie still and let her do all that was needful. She had plenty of time, she urged, and needed no help to finish up what they had been unable to do the previous day. Alice resisted her persuasion, and insisted upon rising. Lionel's day must not be spoilt, she said. It would grieve him so if he thought she was ill, and her father had left her; so any way, even if she could not do much, she must sit up in the easy-chair. Janet was obliged to yield; and having done all in her power to cheer and comfort the poor girl, she left her, promising to call again in the afternoon.

Meanwhile Broomy and Sparrow were in high glee. They had met by appointment shortly after five that morning, and before ten, had completed every arrangement. Broomy's two shillings had been laid out to the greatest possible advantage, and down the long table in Sparrow's attic little rows of cakes and oranges were arranged in the quaintest manner. Little Kit and Will spent the whole morning talking over the great event of the day, and surveying the preparations with wonder. They were quite content

to go without any breakfast with the prospect of such a treat before them. The crockery question had been settled by Broomy, who had arranged that each boy should bring what he imagined he should require, so that each one should have nothing to complain of in the furniture of the table in that respect.

The preparations were satisfactorily completed, when the sound of many peals of bells roused Lionel from his admiring gaze of the table.

"Now we are going to church," he said.

"To-day?" answered Sparrow, rather reluctantly.

"Yes, of course. Come, brush yourself up, old fellow. I shall run round and put on my new things, and then come back for Will, and Kit too. You can lock the door, and we will all go together. Bill and Plover and Tibbut said they would come if they could," and the light-hearted boy bounded down the stairs, and sped away to his little room.

He felt almost too fine dressed in his new suit, though it was only a simple dark gray cloth. It was so long since he had had anything really new, he almost felt oppressed by his tidy aspect, all the more because he could not but feel conscious of the contrast it would present to his friends. He ran up to see Alice before he started, and, boy-like, full of energy and happiness himself, he did not notice any change in his sister.

"It is beginning well what I hope will be a very bright day to you, Lennie; and I think you and

your friends will not only make each other happy, but will do each other good," she said, as she returned his affectionate embrace and merry Christmas greeting. She felt very proud of him as he stood before her in his new clothes. He was growing a tall, well-built boy, endowed with much natural activity and grace, in addition to his particularly bright and winsome face. He could not fail to look attractive.

Alice listened to his steps dying away in the distance, and could not help wishing she were strong enough to accompany him, as she closed her eyes and leaned back wearily in her chair. Rousing herself presently, she saw upon the table a little parcel wrapped in white paper, tied up and directed to herself, "with Lennie's love." "Dear fellow, to think of his spending his money on me," she said, as she opened it, curious to know what his choice of a gift might be. A bright piece of blue ribbon, carefully folded in silver paper, met her eyes, and she smiled to think that the boy had noticed the absence of all such little adornments upon her person since she had given up work at Maples. She put it on, and hoped he would be pleased to see her wearing it upon his return.

This present for Alice had cost Broomy endless anxiety. Sparrow was the only person he had taken into his confidence; and after numerous consultations they had decided that nothing could be nicer than something bright to wear, so together they had

chosen the ribbon for Alice; and after an equal amount of consultation and debating a second piece was bought for Mrs. Parker, and conveyed to her door early on Christmas morning by Sparrow himself.

Broomy's friends were true to their appointment, and the boys readily found places in the comfortable free seats of the church to which they went. They thoroughly enjoyed the morning service, and seemed for the first time to realize what Christmas was. Little Will was delighted with all the holly and decorations, and whispered confidentially to Broomy that never before had he been anywhere where it was so beautiful. Then as the clergyman gave out his text, and told the Christmas message so simply and sweetly, even this little boy understood something of its meaning, and a sense that some One he had not known about before knew all about him and cared for him, lightened the sometimes burdened little heart. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake," was the clergyman's Christmas text; and feeling, if it was for "little children," it was for him, Will listened the whole way through. All the boys had been very attentive, and they walked quietly and gravely away from the church. "It was good, wasn't it?" said Broomy to Charlie as they neared St. Ann's Court.

"Yes, that it was; I never knew before why people made such a fuss about Christmas. It is




worth trying a bit, though, if somebody cares." Then he abruptly turned the subject, as though ashamed of having said so much, and finally rushed off in his old impetuous way, shouting out he should be back before long.

Broomy knew his friend so well he was not surprised; and taking Kit and Will safely home, left them in charge of the feast.

"I *did* like it," said little Will; "and when my leg's very bad I will try and not be cross with Kit. I'd like to be one of the 'little children.'"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CHRISTMAS DAY IN ST. ANN'S COURT.

VERYTHING was ready, and Broomy and Sparrow, on the tip-toe of expectation, were waiting for their guests. Amidst much laughter, the pudding had been carried round, all steaming hot, in Alice's old market basket. Mrs. Parker had brought pies and tarts in such abundance that the boys fairly danced with delight. Bright tears gathered in her eyes as she thought of all the misery and sadness out of which this little time of joyousness came, and she only wished she might do for all these boys as much as the little she had done for Broomy. A few touches from her hand, and a few little alterations in the arrangements, made a wonderful difference in the look of the table. Nothing but a woman's hand can give that look of coziness and comfort we so love in our cottage homes; and Janet left before the guests arrived, glad to have been a helper in this little Christmas festivity.

The chimes had hardly finished striking three

when a shout from Kit and Will, who had stationed themselves at the window, and the sound of many feet, warned the two hosts that their friends were arriving. The great pudding was hastily lifted from before the fire, the large coffee-pot was taken off the hob, and all was ready before the first knock at the door.

Tramp, tramp came the feet up the stairs. The neighbours could not think what those young Bakers were up to; such a noise and such a scuffling of feet upon the attic floor as went on all the afternoon! But they remembered it was Christmas day, and refrained from interfering.

In came the boys, and Broomy and Sparrow fairly laughed to see their looks of astonishment at the sight of the feast prepared for them. Broomy counted them. "Ten; that's all right. Now to your seats, gentlemen."

There they stood—ten boys from our London streets, all gathered together by the good influence of this bright boy, who surveyed them so proudly as they came in. There was an attempt to look tidy in them all. Hands and faces were clean, and though some had no hats and some no boots, and ragged elbows and torn jackets were the rule rather than the exception, yet the bright faces and animated expressions made them a pleasant sight to look at. They had attended to Broomy's request. Some came armed with mug and plate, some had even brought a fork

and spoon; all had done what they could, and Sparrow was pretty well able to supply deficiencies from his slender resources.

"Doesn't the Lion look fine?" was the universal comment. There was no jealousy or envy; they all gloried in Lionel's doings and successes. There was not one of them but felt they were the better for knowing him; and any attempt to depreciate him would have been warmly opposed by the "cubs," as Sparrow always called them.

"Now I'm going to say grace," said Broomy. "Hats off, and stand up;" and as they obeyed, rather wondering what this meant, he bent his head and said the grace his mother always used. "I wonder if she sees us now," was the thought that flitted across his mind.

Broomy presided over the large coffee-pot, while Sparrow expended his efforts in cutting up the pudding. And then the fun began; such laughing, such talking, and such lots of good things to eat. It was the first time they had known what Christmas was like, and all the sadder parts of their lives were forgotten while they gave themselves up to a thorough enjoyment of this red-letter day. Sparrow's drollery was never more appreciated, and Broomy's quaint, quick sayings drew forth peals of laughter. There was no doubt about the boys' appreciation of all that was provided for them. The great pudding disappeared entirely; the pies and tarts vanished as if

by magic; cakes, nuts, oranges—there was a complete clearance of them all.

"Now, the Lion will make a speech," said Plover.

"A speech—yes, a speech," was echoed all round.  
"Go ahead, Lion."

Broomy, thus urged, rose, and amidst much clapping he began:—

"All I can say is, Sparrow and me, we are awfully glad to see you here, and we hope you've liked it."

"That we have," from twelve grateful hearts, gave an affirmation to his hope.

"But, you know, you've not got to thank us for it. It was all Miss Raine (she's a young lady), and Mrs. Parker (she's my friend), and Alice, my sister—they did it all. I am—we are, I mean, we did want you to have a nice Christmas; but I'm more glad because you *can* come—you know I mean that you've given up the drink and all that, and so we've got to know one another. And now I want you to say it again, and then I have something to tell you.

"Now, you won't ever drink anything that can make you the worse for it?"

"Never," said they all.

"And you won't smoke so long as you are boys?"

"No, we won't."

"And you won't ever steal or take anything?"

"Never."

"And you'll try and remember not to swear and use bad words?"



"THE LION" MAKES A SPEECH.

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"We will."

"Well, now, I was talking to a friend of mine t'other night. He's a policeman, so he knows lots of things, and he was telling me that there's lots of chaps now-a-days fighting all the same way as us. They've all made up their minds just as we have never to drink, and they calls themselves Bands of Hope; and he says it makes it easier like, because you all put your names in a book, and then you have teas and lectures and all sorts of things, and get to know each other. I thought it so odd that any one else should be doing the same as we do, so I'm going to try and find them out, and then I'll tell you all about it. I 'specs that young chap that preached this morning would know. I often see him about. I shall ask him, and tell you all about it; only you must promise you'll all join."

"We'll do what you do, Lion," said Plover, and all the others joined in.

"Well said, cubs," remarked Sparrow.—"Now, sit down, old fellow, and I'm going to make a speech.

"Now, this is what I've got to say: You see we are all very 'appy."

Clapping of hands assured him they were all of the same mind.

"Just so. Well, now, I for one knows some one as isn't, and I 'specs all of you does the same."

A general nodding of heads showed that to every mind some saddened life could be recalled.



"Well, then, says I, why's we 'appier than them? Why, I believe it's just as 'cause they don't know as but what they are as 'appy as they can be. Well, you see there's the Lion: 'e started off first, so 'e's a'ead of us all. Then comes me. Well, it was only 'cause 'e asked me and bothered me so I ever didn't go on as I'd been doing before. Then comes Davy: 'e's not 'ere, 'cause 'is uncle's taken 'im down to see the sea. It was atween us we got 'im into order. Then Plover and I tumbled up against each other some'ow; and then Plover brought Jack. Don't you see as 'ow I mean? It's something like that chain up there: you can't catch 'old of one link, but what that catches 'old of another, and so on. Now, 'ere are twelve of us to-day—the brats don't count. Now, if we says we'll 'ave another Christmas dinner this day next year, let us be sure of twenty-four at the very least,—we'd stow them in somewhere; and, Lion, you wouldn't mind twenty-three cubs?"

"Rather not, old fellow."

"Well, I say, though, don't you sometimes feel awful, now you 'ave left it off, and you sees 'eaps and 'eaps of fellows just every bit like we, drinking as though they were old men? 'Tisn't as though they didn't know: why, there's not one of us but sees what it comes to in the end, so we might do what we could. And you see it's Christmas now, and the church, that is to say, the clergyman, 'e said you know that—I say, Lion, can't you 'elp a feller

out?" said Sparrow, turning appealingly to his friend.

He had been speaking so energetically, his droll little face all full of earnestness and anxiety, the boys had wondered at him. His eyes were all shining as he dropped into his seat, and they thought he was going to cry; his words, especially those he could not say, had come from very near his heart.

"He means," said Broomy, his face flushing with the effort,—“well, that it isn't only just to help them here. God cares, you know, that they should all be helped, and we think it is a bit of work we may all do for Him, and it won't be no good unless we look at it that way.”

A reverent silence dropped over the boys for a minute or two, and then they began again: not that they forgot the words that had just been spoken to them, but it is not in boys' nature to keep to the same thing long. Speech-making came to an end, and chestnuts were produced to be roasted on the bars, and the bright party did not break up till the clock chimed half-past six.

“And you promise about the Band of Hope?” said Broomy, as they began to go.

“We promise, Lion,” was the answer; and they went out into the darkness better and braver boys from that Christmas treat in Sparrow's room.

Broomy watched them down the stairs; and then

turning to Sparrow, he held out his hand, which was warmly grasped.

"It was first-rate; wasn't it?" he said.

"Yes, indeed; and I don't think it will end here."

The boys felt, as they stood silently looking into the fire, that they were nearer to each other than ever they had been before. They had always liked each other since the first day when their acquaintance began in so strange a manner; but it was a more manly and true affection that was now growing up between them. They had perfect trust in each other, and that strong confidence which knows it may appeal for help in every emergency, and this united them very strongly. But there was a deeper and more abiding tie springing up, and looking upon their work as God's work for them, bound them more closely than anything else possibly could.

"Sparrow, you were capital," said Broomy; "you said just the very thing we wanted."

"I want to try more," he said; "and you see 'ow it all 'angs together. If you 'adn't got me, I shouldn't 'ave got Plover, and Plover wouldn't 'ave got Jack, and Jack wouldn't 'ave told you of Tibbut. Each one's only a beginning; so if we each get one, we each get so many more as well."

"Yes," said Broomy; "I believe I've been getting lazy, Sparrow; I must try more."

"I am going to bring you a new cub to-morrow,"

said Sparrow,—“such a feller; but 'e wants to do better awful bad.”

“Well, I hope we shall have lots more Christmas days like these. O Sparrow! sometimes I think of the days when we'll be grown up; and I think if all the cubs will go on doing then, what lots and lots of fellows might be helped to keep straight. And we'd give them such dinners; wouldn't we, old fellow? They shall have splendid Christmas days. 'Twill be fun!”

“But it takes so long to grow up, and there are so many 'ard things to come first, I can't think 'ow as you do; I always only 'ope there are a few years to come,” said Charlie pitifully. “Do you know, sometimes I wonder 'ow I shall keep straight; what with the brats, and mother coming home in March.”

“Don't trouble about the future. Take the things as they come, as he said this morning,” replied Broomy.

“You must help me, Lion. I've lots of 'ard things to do, but I'll try and keep straight ahead.”

“Yes; and, you know, ‘for His name's sake,’” said Broomy reverently; and then he too turned to go home, and poor little Sparrow was left alone in the dark top attic.

The two little boys had fallen asleep, whilst he still sat on thinking. Pitifully ignorant, and labouring under every disadvantage, this little lad had grown up to thirteen years of age, and had never

heard the Christmas story of a Saviour's love before that day. It had attracted him wonderfully as he listened to it from the earnest, faithful clergyman whom he had heard that morning. He thought over all he could remember of it now, and it seemed so strange, so sweet, it brought inexpressible comfort to his lonely little heart. He didn't know he had been so bad before, he thought; but the preacher said Christ knew him through and through, and if so, He knew all the bad there was in him. And yet He still said those words, and he repeated them over and over to himself, "Forgiven you for his name's sake." And they were true, so true, and he couldn't doubt them, for that would be doubting Him; and after the Christmas story of His love no one could do that, he thought. He felt so glad; and the already weary and heavy-laden little soul gained a sense of *that* rest before he closed his eyes on this his first happy Christmas day.

Broomy walked away with a very happy and yet a very humble heart. He felt so glad, so thankful he had been let to have this great pleasure, he wanted to thank some one; and as he looked up through the frosty air to the clear-shining stars, his heart went up in gratitude to Him "who giveth all." Then his thoughts drifted off to his mother. "It's better for her to be safe there than where Sparrow's mother is," he said; "but I would like to know if she is grieved with me now for never having come home to say

good-bye, or if she knows it was not on purpose. She would have been glad to see the boys to-night, I know ; and she would have loved Sparrow for speaking out so bravely ; it was good to hear him."

Thus thinking, first of one thing, and then of another, he wandered home, hoping Alice had had a pleasant day too. He crept upstairs, hoping to find his father in ; but the absence of any light under the door told him he must not expect that. He went in ; the fire was almost out, and no one was there. He crossed the room, and gently pushed the door that opened into Alice's little apartment. All was silent there ; but by the light of the fire in the tiny grate he could distinguish Janet's form, and behind in the darkness he could see Alice. He advanced, with a strange fear at his heart warning him that sorrow was near.

"Is she ill?" he asked gently.

"Ay, ay, bairnie ; dinna disturb her," said Janet, raising her finger ; and Broomy, forced to wait quietly, drew a stool to the fire, and sat patiently till his sister should awake from her uneasy slumber.

It was not long before she opened her eyes ; and seeing her brother, she smiled and beckoned him towards her.

"You are not ill?" he said, bending over her ; "not very? You will soon be well again ; won't you, Alice?"

She shook her head. "But never mind that now, Lennie ; I want you to tell me all about your day. I hope it has been a pleasant one."

"Oh, so pleasant!" was the reply; and then, while Janet and Alice listened, he recounted all that they had done, and how much the boys had enjoyed it, and had sent their many thanks to those who had made all the nice things for them. Sparrow's brave, original little speech was repeated as nearly as he could remember. "Oh, it *has* been a jolly Christmas day! But it wouldn't have been if I had known how ill you were, Alice. And where is father?"

"Out."

"He has not been out all day?"

"Yes."

"Oh, how *could* he? just to think of spending Christmas day so. I must go after him."

"Not yet, Lennie; I want to talk to you a little," and she drew him into a chair by her side.

"I knew I was getting weaker, but I did not know it would come all of a sudden like this. We will leave that now, though; I have some good news for you, Lennie. I never told you that when mother was dying she wrote a letter to you, which you have never had yet. She wrote it after you had kept away three days, and she felt she should not see you again. It is all in pencil, and so has got rather faint, but I think you will be able to read it, dear. Get me that brown box from the shelf, and I will give it you."

Lionel's face had flushed, and he looked at her wonderingly.

"Do you mean that you have had it all these years and have never given it me? O Alice!"

"No, no, Lennie; I never had it till to-day. You know I always told you I never could get father to give me the key that locked up mother's things; and I knew you would fret so for the letter if you knew that it was there. He came home quite sober last night, and was so kind and gentle. I told him all about Miss Raine's visits, and he seemed so pleased with the coat, I thought I might try again. You know, Lennie, I have begged him for it so often, I almost thought I never could do it again; but for your sake I tried, and he gave it me. So bring the box here, dear, and I will show you the letter."

Lionel's hand trembled as he placed the box by her side. Words from his mother, after so long a time, would be precious indeed, and he reverently took the folded paper as Alice opened the well-worn Bible and placed it in his hands. He moved across the room to where the candle stood, and there read those loving words, coming to him with all the power of a voice from the grave. It seemed almost too wonderful that this should have been waiting for him all this time, and he should only have known it now, after he had borne the suffering it would have done away with. "O mother, mother!" was the cry of his heart, "if only you were here to say it." It was such a letter as only a mother, leaving her boy in the midst of such temptations and difficulties as Edith



left her Lionel, would know how to write, and her loving warnings and hopes came with a wonderful power to that son, as he read them, traced by her own hand.

"And, darling," she had written, "I am afraid when you come home and find that I am here no longer, you will blame yourself too much. I do not know what is keeping you from me now, but God has taken away all fear and anxiety. I can trust you to him, and feel he knows where you are, so do not think my last days here were made miserable by you. There is only one thing I should like to have said to you, and I can write that just as well, and Alice will give you the letter. Your thoughts will be going back to the first Sunday when I was taken ill, and you may think it was your fault; but do not do that, dear boy, for indeed it was not so, but God's own wise ordering. I might, perhaps, have lingered on a short time longer if the attack had not come on so suddenly; but, as I told you and Alice in the morning, I knew my time down here was growing short. The doctor told me my heart was so bad he wondered I was still alive, and there was always the chance of my dropping down any moment. So do not grieve for my sake; only pray to God earnestly that you may never deal hastily with your father again; and you must thank Him, as I do, that while He let us be together He gave it to you to be the greatest comfort and joy of my life, and try, when I am gone, to be the same for your

father." Then followed many words of help and hope, which sank into Lionel's heart, and were an untold comfort to him in the dark days still to come.

"You must read it, Alice," he said as he finished; and leaving it with her, he stepped across into the farther room, whither Janet had gone to leave the brother and sister alone.

"It was not my fault," he said; "she says it was not my fault. I did not help to kill her; it was false and untrue, and I have got it in her own words, so I shan't mind what any one says."

"Eh, laddie, but that is good for ye! I told you we must only wait and we should see it was all plain."

"I feel so different," he said. "I never could think of her without those cruel words sounding again in my ears; but now it is her own words I shall think of, and instead of pressing me down and making me almost afraid to see her, they'll make me ready to do anything, just for the thought that she wanted it. But, Mrs. Parker, what is the matter?" he added, noticing tears on Janet's cheeks.

"Eh, laddie, but why should ye have my troubles as well as your own to bear? I'm an old woman now, and can't expect things to look bright."

She tried to cheer up, but her heart was heavy, and Broomy's quick sympathetic look saw and understood her sadness.

"It's Joe?" he said softly; and she nodded her head.

The boy turned abruptly and left the room. "While I was so happy," he muttered to himself as he went downstairs.

It had been a sad Christmas day to Janet and Alice. After Mrs. Parker had left her in the morning, Alice had got everything ready for her father. As dinner-time approached, the small piece of roast beef and the beautiful little pudding were attractively arranged upon the table,—all was made to look as pleasant and comfortable as possible; and Alice sat and waited, hoping soon to welcome her father. Every bone in her body was aching sadly, and a dull feeling in her head and the fever that parched her lips made it hard work for her to keep up. She waited on, however, hoping that some thought of her loneliness, some wish for home-joy would bring him in on Christmas day; but the hope was vain. No thought of his daughter, no memory of her love and gentleness, no sense of duty as a parent, troubled Robert Franklin throughout that day.

Alice roused herself as the time approached for Broomy to fetch the pudding, and after warmly thanking him for his little present, she sent him off with a light heart and many wishes for a successful afternoon. Then as his footsteps died away she drew the little key from her pocket and opened her mother's box. Her first look was to see if the letter was safe, and finding it was so, she gently and reverently turned over the different things. Alice had often

looked at them before when she was a child. There was a little piece of each of the little Raines' hair, there were a few letters from Mrs. Raine and one or two from Robert, her prayer and hymn book, and different little relics of past days, her wedding-ring, as Robert had placed it, and her Bible—both were there; but where was her watch?

Ah, Alice! still that thought that springs up in your mind. Turn resolutely from it, lest too bitter a feeling should rise in your heart against one who would sell even his dead wife's watch for drink; and if you must think, do so with pity rather than with anger. She understood then why he had so feared to give her the key.

"I shall be going to her soon," she thought, as she lay back in her chair. "I had hoped I could have told her father was on his way to come after us too; but I shall not have so glad a message." She took her mother's Bible to read a little, dwelling lovingly upon those passages she had marked.

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." The words caught her eye, underlined with ink, and on the margin was written the date of her own birth.

"I never knew she had marked that text for me," she thought; "and yet it is one that helps me more than any other. I think sometimes I should almost have given up, it all seemed so hopeless; but then I would feel there was one thing to be sure of, and

that one thing worth more than all else. I think St. John must have known, when he wrote all about love, how much we poor people would want to know about it; for God knows it is all driven out of our lives down here."

Thus the afternoon passed away, and Janet's knock at the door sounded very welcome, when, faithful to her promise, she appeared shortly after five o'clock. She saw at once how ill the girl was. Low fever had evidently set in, and her anxious and troubled thoughts had only served to increase her prostration. Janet soon put her to bed, and, soothing and ministering to her in every way, had the satisfaction of seeing her fall asleep, and she sat by the fire thinking her own sad thoughts till Broomy's entrance interrupted her.

Joe had been pleased with Mr. Raine's kind present; and Janet, like Alice, cheered by his softened manner, had hoped to make it a bright Christmas day for him. She had succeeded in part: he had stayed at home till after dinner, and had thoroughly enjoyed the tempting meal she had prepared for him; but then, sauntering out with his pipe, he had as usual met idle companions like himself, and had gone with them to misspend the remaining hours of the day. As soon as she felt only too sadly sure that she might not expect him again, Janet put on her things and went round to Black Horse Court, feeling uncomfortably anxious about Alice. She was able to rejoice to hear

of Broomy's pleasant day, and was glad that he should be freed by his mother's letter from a burden that was pressing so heavily upon his young spirits; but afterwards, when she sat alone by the dying fire, the intense sadness of this struggle in which they were all engaged, and their bitter helplessness, pressed heavily upon her spirits: and thus it was that Broomy found her with tears upon her face.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

**B**ROOMY walked quickly and resolutely through the streets. "It won't do to be angry," he said to himself, "but it's awfully hard to help it. I wonder if they mind a bit if they break their wives' hearts? Oh!" and he clenched his teeth,—“but I mustn't think; all I've got to do now is to manage the best way I can to get them home. Something must be done; it is clear they are neither of them the better for my care yet. Well, to work; Joe first.”

After sundry turns and crossings, Broomy stopped. He had come to the place where, night after night, he waited to see Joe safe home; he must do something more than wait to-day, he felt, so, summoning all his courage, he marched boldly in. Joe was easily distinguishable, his tall figure towered above those around him. The boy's heart almost failed him as he noticed how full the room was. Waiting would not help or strengthen him, however, so he advanced to where Joe stood.

"Mr. Parker, you are wanted; and you are to come home at once with me."

A stupid stare and an inarticulate mumble from Joe was all the answer he received. Several men looked round, for the boy spoke firmly and clearly; and he offered such a contrast to those amongst whom he stood, that those who turned remained looking.

"You are wanted—do you hear?" said Broomy, a second time.

"And who wants me, I should like to know?" he mumbled.

"Who wants you, indeed, when it's Christmas day, and you've left your wife alone! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Joe Parker—and every one of you?" he added in an undertone, looking round and wondering if at the homes of all these men there were women waiting and watching like those he knew.

The idea that this boy had come to fetch him seemed slowly penetrating Joe's brain.

"Wants me, do you say?" he asked again.

"Yes, you; your wife wants you; it's Christmas day, and she's lonely, and you've no right to make her so. So come."

Several men laughed at the boy's authoritative tone, but some were shamed by Broomy's words, and they urged him to go; so finally he moved slowly to the door.

The landlord, being fully occupied with the many customers such days usually brought, had not ob-



served this little scene, but noticing Parker making his way towards the door, called after him that he was leaving far too early, and tried to induce him and his young companion to turn back again. Broomy took upon himself to answer, and he was only too thankful to find himself and Joe really standing upon the pavement outside the tavern.

"Now, come home," he said; "it's cold. We'd better look sharp."

It did not take long to reach the little house, and having placed Joe in the arm-chair, Broomy proceeded to rekindle the fire, and put the kettle on to boil. Parker sank into a heavy sleep immediately, and Broomy was still on his knees before the grate when Janet opened the door. She took it all in at a glance.

"Oh, my laddie, my laddie," she said as she came up to him, "this is brave and good of you," and she stooped and kissed his bright face.

"I told him you wanted him," said Broomy, trying not to show how pleased he felt, "so you will look after him now; I have other work to do."

"God bless you for this," said Janet, as she held out her hand to him and wished him good-night.

Broomy was soon threading his way through the dark streets a second time. His speed slackened as he approached the Lion. It was hard to go in there and, in a sort of a way, disgrace his father before his mates; but if it saved him in the end,

what mattered the way? was his second thought; and as he pushed the door, the text of the morning rung in his ears, and taking this as something he might do for "His name's sake," he went in.

"Hilloa, youngster! you're too fine for us—what do you want here?" were the first rough words that greeted him as he cast an inquiring glance around the brilliantly-lighted room.

Broomy took no notice, and pushed on, hoping to see his father. The next minute he caught sight of him, and the lad's heart sickened at the sight, and he felt it hard to call *that* "father." Condemn him not. He mastered himself in a moment, and walking straight up to him he said in a low tone,—

"Father, come home; Alice is ill, and she wants you."

An angry rebuff was all he expected and all that he got, and Franklin rose from his seat to fill yet again the glass he had drained too often.

"Father," still pleaded Broomy, "do come; you don't know how ill Alice is; and it's Christmas day, and she is disappointed. I've come to fetch you, father."

He had raised his voice in his anxiety, and many looked round in wonder to see so bright and well-dressed a boy speaking to such a constant visitant at the Lion as Robert Franklin.

"Oh! why do you give it to him?" said Broomy, turning in despair to the landlady, as she handed the

glass to the already half-intoxicated man; "don't you see he has had too much? Do you want to kill him and kill us? I should have thought you had ruined enough men by this time."

Broomy was excited, and unwisely he laid his hand upon his father's arm to draw him away from the counter. A man can often bear being spoken to when he cannot bear to be touched, and at that gentle grasp of his arm Robert's anger rose. Without a moment's warning he raised his hand and struck his boy heavily on the shoulder. Broomy tottered, and almost fell; then the hot angry blood mounted to his forehead, and he almost turned to go away; but by an effort he controlled himself, for the bitter humiliating remembrance of a blow he once had given rushed into his mind.

A cry of "Shame, shame—his own son!" came from several voices; and the landlord, seeing his customers were becoming excited, some siding with Franklin and some with his son, and fearing a regular uproar, opened a side door and turned Robert out. Broomy was by his side, and seeing there was no help for it, his father walked sulkily home.

Broomy just looked in to tell Alice, but finding her asleep, he took the Bible and letter and went quietly down to his own tiny room. "And this is Christmas day," was his last thought as, glad to rest at last, he laid his head upon his pillow.

And is it not so every Christmas day? Are there

not thousands who go to their rest with mingled feelings such as Broomy's? Those who know a little of that aspect of life which it presented to him, can only lie down with aching hearts at the terrible abuse of a day so fraught with truest joy. There is such sin, such misery, that even a slight knowledge of it is enough to crush into inactivity. But God expects no one to do the whole; he takes care of that, only he does expect each one to do his part. Like the "cubs," it may be given to some to seek to save one other, or like Lionel to have the care of many; but, whichever it is, he knows the measure of power and opportunity he has granted to each one, and according to that which might have been done, will the praise be given to that which is accomplished.

No greater contrast could be found between Christmas day as spent in the Black Horse Court and that in Errelle Square. Whilst Alice was suffering in patience and Broomy was working in earnest, Guy and Mabel were spending a quiet happy day in their own home. Two things occurred to make it a peculiarly happy day to Mabel, and she lay down to rest at its close with a glad and thankful heart.

When she took the letters to her father's study that morning and waited to hear if there was any news, he handed her a short business-looking note and told her to read it through. She did so twice,

and the colour mounted to her cheeks as she turned to him.

"Does it really mean that you are going back to Edgley? O father!"

"Yes, Mabel. I thought you would be pleased," for her astonishment was so great he could hardly tell if she were glad or not.

"So I am," she said, putting her arms round his neck. "I had always hoped you would;—oh, we shall be glad, every one of us! And when are we going?"

"Little puss, to think of your being in such a hurry! So you are tired of London already?" said her father, looking gratified to see her so pleased. "Not yet; there is everything to be got ready. I am afraid Mr. Crane has not kept up the place."

"That is good Christmas news; may I tell the boys?" said Mabel as she turned to leave.

"By all means."

All the younger members of the family were assembled in the schoolroom busily opening their many Christmas cards, when Mabel entered with her tidings. Guy was supremely delighted, and testified to the same by a series of antics of a somewhat alarming nature; and the little girls, seeing both brother and sister pleased, joined in the rejoicings, though they hardly knew what for. Harold only held aloof, and when Mabel appealed to him to say he was glad, he only shrugged his shoulders and said

he liked London best. Merry talk about all they would do in their country home filled up the time till they started for church.

Mrs. Malane and her boys joined the party afterwards for the remainder of the day, and the evening was spent in merry games with the children.

Guy and Lilian were teasing each other by the schoolroom fire as Mabel returned from seeing her guests off.

"It's a vulgar word, Aunt Caroline said it was, and it isn't in the dictionary," Mabel heard Lilian say vehemently.

"You spell so beautifully, I should think it was always hard work for you to find a word in the dictionary, Lil," replied Guy.

"Well, you shouldn't call yourself vulgar names, and then tell me it's a secret.—Should he, Mabel?"

"No, dear, of course not; but what has he been doing?"

"Why, he said he was a teetotaler the other day when he was packing the Edgley box, and he told me to look it out in the dictionary, and I couldn't find it; so I asked Aunt Agatha this evening, and they all laughed, and Aunt Caroline said they were only vulgar people, and Guy isn't a vulgar person."

"Oh dear! oh dear! what a very long story," said Guy. "Now, Lil, you try and listen to me and I will make it plain. What is tea? You know. Very well, then, suppose I never drank anything else but

tea, should I not be a total tea-drinker? and mightn't I turn it round the other way and say I was a tea-totaler? Now you, for instance, are a milk-totaler, and Madame is a coffee-totaler, and some people are beer-totalers. Now, do you understand?"

"Guy, don't talk such utter nonsense; don't you see she is taking it all in?"

"Well, Lil, I hand you over to Mabel; only there is no need she should know yet, so don't burden her little heart now with the things she *must* know when she grows up," he said, lifting the child from the hearth-rug and placing her on Mabel's knees.—"But it is true, Mab," he added, changing his tone.

"O Guy! do you really mean that?" said his sister, understanding at once.

"Yes," he said; "only don't look so, Mab. I didn't know I was such an awful coward before. I feel as ashamed of myself as if I were doing something wrong every time I say 'No.'"

Mabel held out her hand, and as it met Guy's in a very tight squeeze, she felt glad they were now fighting on the same side.

"It will be harder for you than for me," she said. "What made you think of it?"

"That young Franklin and Sparrow and you, but chiefly seeing and thinking."

So Christmas day ended brightly for Mabel. She knew a little of the terrible temptations besetting the boys and young men of our families, and she

could not feel glad enough that one of her brothers should have taken a step that would save him from endless snares and difficulties. She felt sure Guy had not taken this resolution without really facing all it meant, and she fervently hoped that nothing would ever arise to shake him in it. She only wished Harold would do the same, but for that she must wait and pray.

Into one other house we must look before Christmas day shall finally close, and this short period of rest and happiness pass by and the world go on as it went before. In a small room looking over the London streets a young clergyman was standing, thoughtfully gazing down upon the passers-by. But his thoughts were not there. He was mentally surveying the day that was so near its end, and the glad feeling of having faithfully done his duty brought a joy too deep and true for the loneliness and sadness of his circumstances to overcast. Hartley Averte had only lately come to live in London, and during these first weeks of the winter his heart had been sadly overburdened by the sight of the misery around him; but he nerved himself to face it all, and by a fellowship in suffering to help his fellow-men. Age and ill-health had forced his much-loved friend, the incumbent of the church in which he was curate, to pass the winter in a warmer climate, and thus the burden and anxiety of the crowded London district



rested for a while upon the young man. He did not shrink from the responsibility, however, but accepting it bravely, sought to do all that was given to him "heartily."

Yet though his thoughts had been comforting, he turned from the window with a sigh. "And this is Christmas day," he said to himself. "How little we dream of such a way of spending it as I have seen to-day! How little we understand of the love and tenderness of the Christmas message, until we have known such misery as this, and know that it is for such as these poor creatures. It is sweet to go to the poverty and sin stricken ones with good tidings such as these, and to tell them they may believe them; that they may go to God and plead them, and ask the forgiveness and the peace he is ready to give for 'his name's sake.'"

Many were in Hartley Averno's mind as he knelt that night in prayer. The seven boys whose bright attentive faces had attracted his notice that morning in church were not forgotten, and many of his poorer friends were on his heart that night; but if he prayed for one more earnestly than another, it was for Mabel Raine.

So ended that Christmas day, and sleep and darkness hid and hushed the joy and the sorrow the few past hours had brought.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A MEETING IN BLACK HORSE COURT.



LONDON was wrapped in darkness, and that hush which hangs over a great city during that brief space in the midnight hours when the turmoil and noise are stayed, was still reigning when Alice awoke. The fire was out, but the night-light Janet had thoughtfully placed by her side cast a dim light over the room. Gradually the events of the past day came back to her, and she quietly set herself to think of what was before her. She was dying, that she knew; but the thought seemed so strange, so awful. Life is never sweeter than when it is going, and the girl could almost find it in her heart to ask for a few years more, in spite of all the sadness and suffering. But all fear soon passed away. She could remember how far from hard it had been to her mother to die; and if she had done all she could for Lennie and her father here, it would be sweet indeed to go to the place above prepared for her, and to know the Master whose steps she had tried to follow here below. So

she strove to still all anxious thoughts as to what would become of those so dear to her. Lennie had been so wonderfully cared for by these new friends; and now that he was doing all he could to help and watch over his father, perhaps her work was done. There was one thing she felt she wanted. Janet was kind and gentle, Miss Mabel was sweetness and goodness itself; but she felt a longing for some one who knew what death was, to come and speak to her words that should strengthen and nerve her. The old clergyman at the church they always went to with their mother was away, she had heard; but Lennie had so often spoken in praise of the gentleman who was taking his place—if only she could get him to come. He had preached from "her text," Lionel had told her yesterday; she would like to see him. She did not see exactly how it was to be managed, but no doubt Lennie or Janet would do something. Then her thoughts wandered off. One thing and another that she would leave rose before her; but the gaining was greater than the losing, and the musings of those silent hours brought her strengthening peace and rest, and before the roar of the city was again heard in the distance, or the tramp of feet and the sound of noisy voices echoed through the court, Alice slept.

Broomy was kneeling by the fire, gently blowing the newly-lighted wood into a flame, when next she opened her eyes, and the flood of sunlight streaming

in at the window showed her it was late. Her gentle inquiry after her father brought him to her side; and, unable to evade her close questioning, Lionel was obliged to reveal his last nights' doing. "But it has all come right in the end," he said, "you see, now you are laid by. Anyway, I *must* have been about, and got his meals, and done things for you and for him. He looked surprised-like when I went into the room this morning, but he didn't say a word; and I got the breakfast ready and did the little bit of cooking, and saw him have it all comfortable."

Broomy was loath to leave his sister; but Alice urged upon him that it was more important that he should keep his place than that he should stay with her, and really there was nothing he could do. She had only to lie there and wait, and learn the lessons it was meant to teach. She told him of her wish to see the clergyman, and Lionel promised to do what he could.

"He'd come if only I could get him. Oh, he *is* good—he's always about among the people; and to hear him preach you would think he lived the same sort of life as we do, he seems to understand it all so."

Thus it came to pass that as Hartley Averne walked slowly and wearily out of the vestry-door that evening, after his Thursday service, he felt his coat pulled, and looking down he saw the boy whose bright face had not escaped his notice among the most attentive of his listeners.

"She is ill, and they say she's dying, and she wants to see you; not to-night, but to-morrow. Will you come?" said Lionel, looking shy and confused.

"Who is it, my boy? I can come with you anywhere now, if you wish it," said Hartley, his kind voice reassuring the lad.

"No, not to-night; she's asleep. It is Alice, my sister. We used to come to this church,—mother and Alice and me,—before you came here; and now I come alone, and Alice wants to see some one, and we thought you would come."

"So I will; but you must tell me where to come to."

"It is the Black Horse Court, at the end of Gresse Street, up at the top of the house. Father's name is Franklin. Any one will tell you where it is."

The old story, thought Hartley to himself. Mother dead, and father drinks, and these two left to struggle through life as they can; and now the sister is dying. I must see what I can do for him; he seems a brave little chap.

"Tell your sister I will come to-morrow afternoon: and keep up heart, my boy; she may get stronger yet."

Broomy shook his head, and he checked a sob as he turned away. The kind sympathy of Hartley's tone touched him; and as he stretched out his hand to him when he said good-night, the consciousness of

what the sorrow was that was drawing out this stranger's pity broke more fully upon the boy, and he felt it was hard indeed to bear.

Alice looked very grateful when Broomy told her how he had succeeded, and she seemed so much brighter altogether, he felt almost inclined to put aside his fears and let himself hope.

But she gently shook her head when he said so once. "I don't think we must want that, dear. The doctor said he did not think it could be; and I feel as though there were a fire burning out all my strength, and I had no power to resist it."

Lionel wondered to see his father so insensible and apparently careless of Alice's state; and as he met him on the stairs, returning earlier than usual, he stopped him.

"Father," he said, "do you know Alice is dying? Why do you keep away from her so? she would like to have you with her before she goes."

"Dying!" said Franklin in surprise. He knew she was ill; he had not thought of this. "It is false; she won't die,—not Alice."

His tone startled Broomy, and looking up, he saw a look of real anxiety upon his father's face. His heart melted towards him;—he really cared after all, then.

"Yes, father," he said; "it will be happier for her; she is dying;" and his voice trembled.

Franklin passed on, and Lionel went his way to meet Sparrow, and then to see Joe.

"Dying!" muttered the man; "no, it can't be. He wanted to frighten me." He went to his daughter's open door, and looked at her as she lay sleeping. A bright spot burnt on each cheek, and the restless, troubled expression of her face showed she was suffering.

"It's father," he heard her whisper. "Oh, don't let him go there! Won't somebody stop him? I have tried, mother." He drew nearer to catch these broken sentences: "He wouldn't listen;" "It's written so plain, 'No drunkard,' 'no drunkard.' O tell him; he can't come to us till he gives it up.—Father!"

She woke up with the cry; and finding him bending over her, put her arms tightly round his neck, and all unaware that she had been speaking in her troubled sleep, she spoke to him so lovingly, so gently, he wondered she could love him still when he was such as she had called him in her dreams.

She spoke to him very simply and sweetly about her going away. She asked him to let Lennie live with him; and then again she pleaded with him to give up the drink. She felt it might be the last time, and her words were so earnest, so beseeching, he bent over her in real sorrow of heart and said that he would try,—and he meant it while he spoke, but he forgot afterwards.

Mr. Averno was punctual to his appointment, and when in answer to her gentle "Come in" he opened the door and Alice saw his face, she felt that one had

come who would say to her the words she needed. His voice was so gentle, and the questions he asked were those of one wanting to know that he might help, she did not mind speaking to him. So some of the sad story was told over again, and all that Mabel had done for them was minutely related by the affectionate girl.

"When I feel afraid to leave Lennie, for fear of what may come, it is so nice to know she takes an interest in him; and Lennie would just do anything she tells him. It has made him so much more gentle and thoughtful. You see mother loved her so, and took care of her, and that made him willing at first to listen to her; but now he knows for himself how good she is, and she lets him tell her about the boys and the things, and it's wonderful how she seems to see what is best to do, and the right way to do it. She is always setting him right. It seems so strange how we should have got to know her now, just as I am going away."

Hartley encouraged her to talk thus to him, for he knew it would bring relief; and then as she spoke of the home-going, he seemed to make all the beauty and gladness of it so near and so real, she thanked God that he had come to her.

"I was beginning to be afraid of the way," she said; "but you have made the afterwards so near, that when we know we are 'forgiven for His name's sake,' all we seem to want is to 'see His face.'"



Hartley had drawn his Bible from his pocket, and was still reading the sweet words of comfort in St. John xvii., when a knock at the door disturbed him. Before it opened he knew who he should see, and he rose as Mabel Raine entered the room.

She flushed when she saw who it was, but advanced and held out her hand. "I did not know you visited here, Mr. Averne; I am afraid we have disturbed you."

"Oh no! your young friend was looking to see you, and I have already been here quite long enough."

"I think I had better not stay to-day: Alice looks tired; you have given her enough to think of."

Alice was indeed looking flushed and weak, and glad though she was to see Miss Raine, she was forced to acknowledge that she felt more inclined for quiet and rest than for anything else just then.

"Can Mrs. Parker stay?" she asked (for Janet had accompanied Mabel).

"Ay, ay," said Janet; "I'll come back again to you dearie, when I have just walked home again with the young mistress."

"I will see Miss Raine home," said Hartley—"I am sure our invalid should not be left alone—if Miss Raine has no objection."

"It is very kind of you, Mr. Averne." And they went out together.

Mabel had not been aware that Hartley was in London, and certainly had no idea that he too was a friend of the Franklins; she had never heard them

mention his name. It was a year and a half since last they met, and since then they had heard but little of each other. That year had changed Mabel from a girl into a woman, and Hartley wondered, as he walked by her side, how rapidly she had developed and grown up. In the past there had always been a free and easy intercourse between them; they had known each other before Mrs. Raine had died, and a close intimacy had long existed between the two families. Now a shade of reserve had dropped over them both; they referred but little to the past, and tacitly avoided any allusion to themselves. They spoke of the one whom they had just left, and Hartley was deeply interested to hear of the chain of events that had given Mabel this little circle of friends among the poor.

"I did not know I was speaking to such heroes when I put in a few words for those seven boys in my Christmas sermon," he said. "It was the funniest sight to see them come into church. They were just a little late, and looked so shy and uncomfortable, three of them forgot to take off their hats; and a little fellow with a bright droll face, who I think must be the one you call Sparrow, picked them off their heads so neatly, you would have smiled. I was afraid they would be noisy, but their reverent, quiet manner was unequalled by any of my other hearers in the church. I wish you could have seen their earnest, listening faces whilst I was speaking."

"It seems so strange," replied Mabel, "when in these boys there is the power to be so much, and do so much more than under their present circumstances they can ever be or do, they should be forced to pass such sad lives."

"I think you are mistaken," said Hartley. "Take that boy Lionel, for instance: would any other circumstances have developed him into such a brave, manly lad as we now see him to be? I do not think it is at the position our poor occupy that we must strike if we want to help them; it is at the terrible influences that make that position a degrading one. You must know what it is that is ruining our English poor, Miss Raine?"

"Yes," said Mabel, "and that is just it. If it were only poverty, or only want of work, a remedy could be found; but when it is wilful choice of what must eventually ruin, it seems hopeless.

"Hopeless! I think not. It is disheartening, it is wearying; but you remember when the disciples failed to cast out a devil, Christ said, by fasting and by prayer alone could it be done. I often think that might help us in our battle against this terrible foe of drink. We cannot take the glass in one hand, and that earnest prayer, by which alone we can hope to do any work, in the other. If there is prayer, there must also be fasting: we must be ready for another's sake to lay aside our own desires; and then only, I think, shall we be strong to cast out this demon of

drink. You have seen and known a little of it, you say; thank God if he has given you a hatred of it without showing you the depths of misery to which it can lead. I do not think any one who sees the horror, the inexpressible loathsomeness of it, such as is constantly meeting us London clergymen, can stand aside from the struggle, and say, 'It may be well for you to abstain, but not for me.' It is something, too, inexpressibly dreadful to one coming from the country, as I do, to meet everywhere with brutal, wicked faces, men and women with vicious, cruel expressions. I go for days sometimes about the district, and not one do I meet upon whom I can look with pleasure, and for whom I can thank God that he or she should live. And yet it is for them, these lost ones, that message, 'Forgiven for His name's sake,' if only they would turn to Him and seek it. It seems a mystery too hard for us to understand, and perhaps we are not meant to yet. Our part is to unite with those who suffer, and to fight, as with a common foe, against this cruel enemy who is doing such deadly work; for surely half the crime and half the sin of our city can be brought home to drink. I think I never felt more clearly its awful power than when I stood last week by one who died from its effects, and from his wild, delirious ravings, passed into eternity."

His voice dropped and his brow contracted as he spoke, and for a minute or two he seemed lost in the

painful recollections his words had aroused. Then looking at Mabel he changed his tone:—

“I must apologize, Miss Raine—I forgot myself; but, you see, it is long since I met an old friend, especially one interested in such work as this, and these things press heavily upon one’s heart.”

“I think it is our right and our duty to know what our fellow-men suffer,” said Mabel, steadying her voice; for these sad things, spoken with all the feeling of a quick, sympathetic nature, had touched her deeply. “And besides,” she added, lifting her eyes to his face, “though it is so sad, I like to hear.”

For a moment the hope flashed through him that it was because they concerned him, and he told them, that she cared to hear; but he steadily put it aside, and continued:—

“I think you are right: it is our duty to know something of this sadder side of life.”

“Yes,” replied Mabel; “but it makes me feel very wicked when I hear and see these sad things, and then go home to our own house, where all is luxury and comfort; and when I see all the people going about as though there were nothing sad in the world, I feel hard and bitter against them, and wish they could be taught a little of what lies underneath the outside show of London life. Now, if I had stood by that man, when I came out through those streets again, and saw the carriages and the splendid houses, and all the thoughtlessness and luxury, I should have

felt—don't you know, Mr. Averte, *how* it makes one feel?"

"Yes, I know," he replied. "I made myself very miserable, when I first came to London, by indulging just such feelings as those. I was always thinking about how other people neglected their duty, until I found at last that whenever I was out to do mine, all the time I was comparing and contrasting one aspect of life with another, and wishing everybody could become as miserable as those around me, instead of wanting all to know what happiness was. It weakened me so; I felt that I was losing influence, and losing the power I had gained to help some. I did not wake up to see my mistake for a long time; and then it was a little lame child who showed me where I had been wrong. I was chatting to her one day, as she sat outside her mother's door, when a beautiful carriage rolled down the street. I saw her eyes follow it till it was out of sight, and I said to her, 'Poor little Annie! she would like a carriage; wouldn't she?' She was a bright little thing, and she looked up with her quaint little old-fashioned face. 'Not now,' she said. 'I like to think it's so nice as some people has their carriages and things; not that it's nasty as everybody hasn't.' It seemed such a reproof. And I have found out how wise St. Paul was when he said, 'Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.' Even those who stand aloof from temperance work—which seems a thing that

every one might help in, one way or another—don't let us judge them. It is not for us to do that. Our part is faithfully to do what has been given to us, and earnestly to pray for others that they may not misuse his abundant gifts. If we prayed more and judged less, we should have more of that love for '*all men*,' which seems so hard sometimes."

"You are in front of me, you see, Mr. Averne. I have only got into the perplexed and troubled part, where it seems as though things were more wrong than they ought to be. I will try to look at them your way, and I daresay that will help me over the difficulties. I think it is such a good thing we came to London this winter, or else I should never have learnt; for we are going back to Edgley soon."

"Back to Edgley? I thought you had quite given it up!"

"No; father only let it. We did not know till yesterday; and we are all so glad."

"Yes, you must be. You do not like London, then?"

"Nothing can compare with Edgley," she said, shaking her head. And then as they stopped at the door—"Father is out; but you will come in and see the boys, Mr. Averne, and your little favourite, Lilian?"

"Not this afternoon, thank you." And shaking her hand, he lifted his hat and turned away.

Mabel hardly knew why, but she went straight up to her room and cried as though some great sorrow had happened to her; instead of a real and unexpected pleasure.

Hartley walked away gravely and quickly. It was past his tea-time, and he knew it; but he did not turn into his lodging as he passed, but pressing on, made his way to one of the lowest and most miserable localities in the district, and there, by the bedside of one rapidly passing away, he spent an hour in earnest work for his Master. His face was paler, perhaps, and his expression rather more set, but it was calm and untroubled; and he felt that the heavenly blessing with such work for his God was greater than the earthly blessing which was denied. "Strange we should meet again, both bound on the same mission, and that one of the highest—ministering to one of Christ's dying ones. O Mabel child! I never dared to hope we might do such work as that together; it makes it harder still. May God help me!" And God did help him, so that he was able to cast his whole burden upon him, and work on single-hearted in his service.

Hartley was seven years Mabel's senior. He was the youngest son of a gentleman living in the same neighbourhood as the Raines. From his earliest years he had been destined for the navy; it was his own wish and his father's, and for this he had been trained and educated. But as the time drew near,



his mother opposed it, and so persistent and earnest was she, that both father and son gave way; and the boy, thoroughly unsettled for life, persuaded his father to let him go abroad with a tutor. This he was allowed to do, and, with short intervals at home, the next two or three years were spent in different places on the Continent. Here his mind received a new bent. Having an intense love of reading and great power of speaking, he determined to enter the Church, merely to become an eloquent preacher. He longed for popularity, longed to be great in some way, and chose this profession as the surest road to fame. Well he remembered telling Mabel of this wish, when she was but a child of eleven, and the serious, reproachful look on her face, as she raised it to his, and said, "I think, if I were a man, and could be a clergyman, I would be so for other people's sake, and not my own." His mother had died before this final decision, and, with his father's full consent, he went to Cambridge, and did fairly well throughout his college career; and then he went forth to strive after his ideal. He became curate in a small country village, and there he stood up to preach his first sermon. Then, for the first time, he saw himself as he was, in the light of what he assumed to be. The upturned, expectant faces of the congregation before him smote him with remorse; his selfishness rose up before him, and hardly able to read what he had hoped would have been a short, eloquent sermon, he hurried home, there

to face and combat these terrible facts. The old aims and old ambitions were dear to him as his very life—it was agony to lay them aside; but he never flinched from a faithful trial of them by the truth of God's holy Word, and feeling that they were all false and baseless, he turned broken-hearted and humbled to where alone he could find the peace he sought. Nobody thought much of the new curate that first Sunday; but they learned to do so afterwards, and many were the regrets when he felt it his duty to answer the call to the London district in which he now laboured.

Mabel had seldom met him during this period, and when they came together again, three years before our tale opens, she was aware of the great difference between the Hartley Averne of former days and the one that met her then. The two short months which he spent with Mr. Raine and his family in Switzerland served to show Hartley that his feelings towards Mabel were more than those of common friendship; and he had little fear of winning from her the same affection that he bestowed. She was young then, but he would wait; and in time he felt confident that he would win. So he left them with a hopeful heart, and returned to his duties in the country. Then trouble came to him. His father died, and through some misarrangement of his affairs the greater proportion of his property went to the children of his eldest son, who was already dead, and

Hartley was left with only a very small income. At first he thought lightly of this; but when he realized that he should now have no right to ask Mabel to share his home with him, it was hard to bear indeed. It was weary work seeking to crush this love which had become the centre of his life and hope; but Hartley was manly and strong, and feeling this to be his duty, he set himself to accomplish it, cost what it might. This had made him all the more ready to undertake the arduous position he now occupied; and he hoped by constant and hard work to be prevented from wasting his time in vain regrets over the lost dream of his younger days. He had never thought of any possibility of meeting her again, unless it should be his seeking; but our lives are not in our hands, and thus it was that their two paths met.

In one way this meeting brought comfort to Hartley: he had feared what she might have become without her mother's influence to guide her, in a position where, if she wished it, her life might be the gayest of the gay. His fears he found were useless; and in Mabel, now womanly and formed, Hartley found his utmost wish for her satisfied. Thus it was through trial and disappointment that Hartley Averne was moulded into the strong stable character we find him, and fitted for the post of a sympathetic friend to his poorer brethren.

Mabel had never heard of the reverses of fortune which Mr. Averne had sustained, and she had won-

dered why one, once so frequent a visitor, should now so seldom come near them. She could not help contrasting their old free and easy intercourse with the somewhat reserved and constrained conversation, both during their walk that afternoon and also during a day they had spent together some eighteen months before, and she sorrowed to lose her friend. Hartley in his unselfishness had drawn this veil of reserve between them, for fear that Mabel might let the friendship she had always had for him grow into anything stronger, little knowing that she had already learned to trust him and to love him more than even she herself was aware.

Guy was delighted to hear again of his former friend, and started off early the next morning to pay him a visit on his own account. Hartley was a great favourite with all the Raines; and Mabel's father, upon hearing from her of the unexpected meeting, warmly expressed the hope that he would frequently visit them as long as they remained in town. For his father's sake as well as his own he wished that the link between them might not be broken, and the kind man took an early opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with the young clergyman.

## CHAPTER XVI

"TOSSED BY WAVE AND BLAST."



LICE FRANKLIN still lingered on. The new year had come, and the first months had passed away, before any marked decrease in her strength told those who watched her daily that they must not hope to keep her with them many days longer.

Mr. Averno visited the sick girl regularly, and his words were a constant comfort to her. She felt, too, that he would watch over, not only her brother, but also her father, when she was gone. And this was a great relief to her; for till she had known him she had thought of Lionel as the only one to care for Robert; and he was young. So the going was made easy for her; and now she was only waiting and longing to be free.

Mabel was often with her too. She would read to her hour after hour, and cheer the long and lonely day. Janet also was an unfailing friend; and if it had not been for her, Alice often wondered what would have become of them all during those days.

Lionel was untiring in his attention and care for

his sister; he was constantly in and out, and would bring her now and then a little bunch of flowers or some little delicacy, to procure which he often denied himself a meal or worked over-hours. "She has done so much for me," was his constant thought; "more than any one else in the world."

Then the change came, and all these loving watchers felt they would soon have to watch no longer. One evening Broomy brought Sparrow in with him, and as the boys sat quietly chatting over the kitchen fire, Janet beckoned Lionel from Alice's door. "Your father," she whispered, "fetch him; she is asking for him; and she is worse, much worse." He was darting off without a moment's hesitation, when Alice's voice recalled him.

"Lennie!—oh, don't let Lennie go! I want him near me."

The boy turned at her voice. "Sparrow," he said, "you know him; will you? At the Lion, probably." And Sparrow went.

Alice was dozing as Lionel took his seat by her side, and the two sat quietly watching, listening for Robert's footsteps, whilst the rain pattered against the window, and the wild wind howled down the chimney. But they listened in vain. Down on the muddy pavement, the heavy rain drenching his clothes, unconscious of all around, lay Robert Franklin, and bending over him with anxious face was Broomy's little friend. He had searched long before

he had found the man. They had seen nothing of him since nine o'clock, they said at his usual haunt, the Lion, and Sparrow had wandered from one place to another, wet and tired with his fruitless search. But it was worse when he found him, far worse to see him in such a state as that, than not to know where he was. "Won't some of you fellows come and help me?" he said, turning back into the Lion as a last resource; but the few who remained at that late hour were not in a state to render assistance, so there was nothing to do but wait, and Sparrow went back to watch till the man should arouse.

Broomy tried in vain to urge Janet to go home that evening.

"Not to-night," she said. "Everything is ready for Joe, and I told him not to wait, as I did not expect that I should be in. He is a different man since that Christmas night you brought him home; though he has not given it up, he takes less, and I can trust him."

Broomy smiled sadly, and turned back to Alice's side; and then he saw what Janet had already seen, that his sister's life was numbered now by hours. They watched silently whilst she alternately roused and dozed again, and they caught the whispered words that dropped unconsciously from her lips from time to time.

Shortly after midnight Broomy rose from his seat;

he was beginning to get anxious about Sparrow and his father, fearing some trouble might have risen between them, and longing that Alice might have her wish to see him again. He buttoned up his coat, and after a moment's hesitation told Janet he felt it his duty to go.

"Kiss her first then, dearie; for I think she is nearly home."

Broomy bent over her, and the girl, rousing for a minute, looked up with a smile of recognition. "Good-bye, darling; and you will bring father." And the eyes closed again, and she sank back into an unconscious doze.

Broomy brushed away the tears that would come, and resisting the wish to stay with her, he walked down the stairs, feeling he might never hear that voice again. He searched in vain for his father and his friend, and at last in despair went round to St. Ann's Court to see if Sparrow were there. All was silent, however; and the two little brothers were sleeping alone in the top attic. He found them at last, but not till the morning was dawning, and the early gray light showed the objects dimly in the streets. The reclining figure on the damp pavement, and the slight boyish form standing by, told the sad tale.

Sparrow turned quickly at the sound of the footsteps he knew so well, and seeing the agony in Broomy's face, he held out his cold little hand. The



boy grasped it,—he wanted something to cling to in these hours of misery,—and they stood silently together for a minute; then Broomy's head dropped upon his arm as he leaned against the stone wall, and he fairly broke down.

"Oh! this is too hard," he sobbed; "I can't bear this. When she is dying, leaving us to go to heaven, to mother—"

Sparrow did not know what to do; and the boy sobbed on in the misery and desolation of his heart, till turning suddenly, he said, "Oh! why am I such a coward, when you have been so brave?" For Sparrow was blue and shivering with the cold; and Broomy squeezed his hand again to express the thoughts he could not speak. Then kneeling down, he tried to rouse his father. "Father," he said, "Alice is asking for you; and she is dying. Don't you care a bit? O father! do you want her to die with a broken heart, and go to mother without one message from you?"

The boy's voice seemed to rouse the man, and he stirred. Broomy passed his hand under his head to raise it.

"Why, he has cut himself!" he exclaimed. "Here, Sparrow, lend a hand and hold him up while I bandage his head; it has been bleeding."

The pain of moving brought Robert to himself, and he sat up, looking dazed and stupid. Broomy managed to get him on to his feet, and between them

the boys helped him home. Broomy refrained from giving him Alice's message then, he was hardly sensible; and together they silently guided him through the streets.

Janet met them at the door, and Sparrow slipped quietly away, leaving the two to attend to the still nearly insensible man. Janet washed and bandaged his head, and Broomy did all he could; and only when his father was again dozing did he turn to Janet with the question she dreaded to hear. But the words died on his lips, for her face told him what the answer would be before he asked.

"We couldna want to keep her, dearie," said Janet, tenderly. "It was just His voice that called her, and she was glad to go. She never spoke again after you left. It was only falling asleep; and the waking has been glad."

"If only we might go too," whispered Broomy, as he laid his tired head upon her knees, and let her comfort him as best she could.

No day had ever seemed so long to Broomy. All his natural courage and strength seemed to have left him; and when Janet had gone away, he utterly broke down. Every now and then a neighbour would come up to see if they could do anything for him, but his sorrow was too great to bear the sight of any one. He knew she must go, but to know she was gone was more terrible than ever he had imagined it could be. He felt so intensely lonely,

and the sight of his father seemed only to increase his misery. He sat still, hour after hour, thinking and mourning, and no ray of comfort dawned upon his soul.

Sparrow came in when work was over, but he shook his head when he offered him comfort. "Don't talk to me now," he said; "it seems too hard to bear;" and Sparrow went away again, puzzled and saddened. He felt it was not right that Broomy should be in this state, and yet he did not know how to help him out of it. "I guess the parson's the only one who could do it," he said. "I'll have a try at him." Sparrow knew where Hartley lived, and was soon standing in his tiny sitting-room.

Hartley looked kindly at the boy. "I think I know your face," he said.

"Likely enough. I comes to your church pretty reg'lar; but it's the Lion I'm after—he's awful bad, he is. His sister's dead, and he's just sat all the day looking into the fire, and won't eat nothing, nor move, nor anything; and if anybody's to do him any good, says I, it's you."

"Do you mean that Alice Franklin is dead?" said Hartley, understanding at once to what the boy was referring.

Charlie nodded.

"Thank God," said Hartley, reverently; "and thank you, my lad, for coming to tell me. I will go round at once. Suppose you walk with me." So the

two set off, and Hartley drew from the boy, little by little, an outline of his history, and he felt glad it was given to him to lend a helping hand to these London lads.

Hartley found Lionel sitting as Sparrow had described him, and he instinctively understood the feelings that were in the boy's heart. The cloud lifted from the boy's face as he saw who was his visitor, and as he placed his hand in the one stretched out to meet him, he said, "Thank you."

Hartley was very gentle with him, and touched his sorrow with a reverent hand; but when he came to speak of his father and of his present duty, his words were stirring and invigorating. He saw that the boy was on the verge of giving up; he knew the feeling was creeping into his heart that having done all he could for so long and failed, he *might* give up and cease from the disheartening struggle.

Lionel felt that Mr. Averno was right. So long as he had only been pitied and condoled with, he would have nursed his sorrow selfishly, and deadened himself to his sense of duty. These brave words nerved him to the work yet remaining to be done. They were unsparing and almost stern, but they were what he needed. It was left to him alone now to watch over this erring man; and Alice's words might still have a meaning, "And you will bring father."

Franklin awoke shortly after Mr. Averno had left, and his boy was ready with a cup of hot coffee to

give him on his arousing. The cut in his head was not severe enough to cause anxiety, and Janet's simple remedies eased the pain. Broomy had forgotten that his father did not yet know of Alice's death, and as he remembered, he shrunk from the thought of telling him. Feeling revived, Franklin sat up, and then his son felt he must wait no longer, so steadying his voice as best he could, he said,—

"Father, you know how ill Alice has been getting? She was worse last night, and I came to fetch you; but you had hurt yourself and could not come. And now she is dead."

Lionel had thought his father's love was almost extinct, and well might he think so from his conduct of late; but Robert had a deep affection for his daughter. During her illness he would never acknowledge she was dying; now the fact faced him, she was dead. He stared vacantly into his boy's face, and asked in a hoarse voice, "When?"

"This morning, between three and four."

The man lay back on his pillow, and suppressed sobs convulsed his frame. Lionel stood aside awe-struck, he did not know what to do; but then recalling Mr. Averno's words: "It may be God's will to call him back to Himself by this very sorrow. I pray that it may be so; and if, when you tell him she is gone, he shows any outward sign of sorrow, thank God for it, and do not attempt to check him." So Lionel lay down to rest, and from the very weariness

of sorrow slept; while his father struggled with the thoughts and feelings that swept through his brain with agonizing force. "My little Alice, my little Alice," he moaned; "Edith's own little girl. Oh, why has she gone away? I would have taken more care of her, but she was too good for me. Dead! No, she can't be."

He rose, and steadying himself, opened her door and stole in. The moon was shining, and in its light he saw the sweet face of his child, with a look more of heaven than of earth upon the calm white brow, and Robert realized that Alice was indeed gone, and with her sainted mother was happier now than ever she had been with him. He knelt by her side in a mute agony, and his past life rose up before him. All stood out sharp and clear, nothing was softened, nothing toned down; his conscience, whose voice he had so often drowned, spared him not; and as scene after scene passed before him, the tension became too great for the poor weakened brain, and he fell insensible upon the floor. There Lionel found him early the next morning, and only with the greatest difficulty could he rouse him and lead him back to his bed. But the strain had been too much, and delirium set in before the day had closed. Broomy, in his terror, fled to Janet for assistance, and she promised to come round as soon as she could and to bring Joe with her. Exercising a little self-control had wonderfully softened and strengthened Joe, and Janet

with a thankful heart was beginning to look for a speedy answer to all her prayers and tears.

She briefly told the tale of misery to her husband, and he did not hesitate to comply with her request and lend his aid as best he could. "He was always a fine fellow was Robert," he said, as they walked round together. But the figure that met his eyes as he entered the room showed him a sadly different form and face to that he remembered, and Joe turned with a questioning look to his wife to know if this was the one he remembered, so bright, so handsome, so frank. Janet nodded; and as he took his seat by the sick man's side he could not help thinking how sad had been the change wrought in them both since last they met, and how near he had been to reducing himself to the same depths. That night by Robert's side did more to set Joe Parker right than any word or sermon had ever done.

For three days the delirium raged, and the wild cries of the father were echoing through the house as the remains of his daughter were carried away and followed through the busy streets by Janet, Broomy, and Sparrow. They laid her by her mother in the cemetery; and though no stone was raised to tell of the gentle life that had passed away, a voice spoke loudly from that lowly grave, and those who had known Alice often thanked God in after-days that the influence of that patient, unselfish life had come into theirs. The boys turned away from the grave

with their kind friend, saddened yet strengthened by their sorrow; and as they walked silently past the many tombs, the words came back to them again: "Therefore.....be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." And as they entered the noise and the hurry of the busy turmoil of life, their hearts rose to try more bravely, more earnestly than they had done before.

Towards evening Robert became quieter, the wild shrieks of fear at unknown horrors were hushed, and the incoherent ravings were stilled. Joe had not quitted his post, and indeed his strength was needed to hold the poor fellow down. But the worst was over now, and they watched anxiously as he became more quiet. His loss seemed to be ever present with him. "Edith's little girl," he would moan. "Oh, don't go, Alice. What was it she said on Christmas night? 'No drunkard'—oh, don't call me that!—'No drunkard.' But it's true. I can't be where Edith is; I've tried, and I can't get there. She was pure and good. No, there's no place in heaven for me." So he would cry and moan, and no one could stop him. His ears seemed shut to all their voices, and only now and then a soothing word from Mr. Averno would hush his wild cries and he would listen. Hartley had not failed to revisit Lionel the next day after his sister's death, and finding the sad state in



which his father was, he made a point of going round to the court whenever he could. Death might be very near this poor man; if only he could be made the means of saving him!

"Say that again," Robert entreated, as Mr. Averno repeated the words, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." "It can't be true; but say it again." And Hartley said it again and again, and many more of God's strong everlasting promises, hoping that to some one of them Robert might cling from the depths of his despair.

Mr. Averno was standing by the sufferer's bedside when Janet and Lionel entered the room on their return from the funeral. They saw at once that a change had taken place; the flush had died from his cheeks, and Robert lay still, looking pale and worn. The doctor also was there, and he signed for perfect silence while he anxiously held his pulse. Was he passing into eternity, or was he struggling back into life? That was the question on every mind, and the suspense seemed almost intolerable. Joe perhaps was the most agitated; his hands were tightly clenched, and the swelling veins upon his forehead told of conflict within. Janet stood by his side, and as her hand rested upon his shoulder he drew it within his own, and the minutes went slowly by.

A slight movement at last, and the doctor laid down his watch, and gently released his patient's hand. The hard breathing was no longer heard, the

convulsed motion had ceased, and the watchers' hearts beat low. Had he indeed passed from them ?

The doctor turned to Lionel. "There is hope," he said. "Your father sleeps ; do not arouse him ; and when he awakes, no excitement. I will come in again later," and he opened the door and left them.

"Let us pray," said Mr. Averne ; and they knelt whilst he offered an earnest prayer for him who was on the border-land between life and death, and for each one of those present.

"You must come out with me," said Hartley to Lionel as he turned to go, and the boy obeyed. He felt what Hartley saw, that the strain was trying him to the uttermost, and the self-control necessary was almost too hard to be maintained much longer. So in kind consideration the young clergyman took the boy with him, made him go to his lodgings and sit with him at tea, and talked to him kindly and brightly, introducing subjects not at variance with his state of mind, but calculated to interest him, and so for a brief space to distract his thoughts. Lionel was very grateful ; he understood the kind motives prompting Hartley, and he responded to them in a way that made it a pleasure to help him. The young clergyman might have asked the boy to do anything for him after that and he would unhesitatingly have done it.

Janet yielded to Joe's wish that he should again be the night watcher by Robert's side ; and she took

possession of Alice's little room, while Broomy went down to his own. For three days Joe had not left that bedside, and now he almost felt afraid to do so. The wild ravings of his poor friend, the sorrow-stricken faces gathered around his bed, the words that had fallen from time to time from Mr. Averno, had gone home to his heart. Like Robert, he clearly saw the selfishness and the sin of his past life; and he thanked God that he had been spared so terrible a punishment for his conduct as that from which his former friend was suffering. His conscience tormented him without ceasing that first night; then came sorrow and repentance and agonizing remorse. The hatefulness of his ways was so apparent he almost grew hopeless of forgiveness. But these words stuck to him, "*I will heal*;" and in all humility he sought his God that night, and found for himself the truth of that promise of free forgiveness and free love "for His name's sake." But he felt so terribly weak, so fearful of the trial to which his new resolutions would be put, he was glad to have good reason for staying in-doors. Thus he spent the midnight hours, whilst Robert slept on.

The gray light of early morning was dawning in the east, when Joe heard his name gently pronounced by a voice close at hand. He turned, and saw Robert with his eyes open looking at him intently.

"Joe Parker," he said gently, "I don't know why

you should be here ; but all through I have known that it was you. Am I getting better, Joe ? ”

“ Ay, ay ; but you mustn’t talk,” said Joe, anxious to keep his mind from wandering on to painful subjects.

“ I must a little, while I can. I know I am only just between the two ; one way or the other, and I shall either be here or there,” replied Robert, and he shuddered as he pronounced the last word.

“ I don’t know where I have been,” he continued ; “ somewhere far away, where there was no light, no sunshine, it was all dark, dark. And I heard voices singing far away, and they were Edith’s and Alice’s ; and I groped and groped, and I always heard them and never saw them ; and I cried and I called to them, and they never heard me,—only once, I think, they must, for the sounds died away in a sort of wail, and then there was silence, utter and terrible, and all sorts of things came creeping round me, and I thought I was in hell. Joe, I think I must have been, it was all fire and burning. I struggled to get away, but as fast as I had climbed a little way out I slid back again. And I was going wild, I think,—everything seemed rushing and whirling and wheeling ; and there were screams and groans, and it was all horror and despair ; and I was slipping back into the deepest depths of it all, when there sounded a voice quite clear, but far away, and it said, ‘ I will heal their backsliding.’ I knew it was meant for me ; and it

said it again and again,—‘*I will* ;’ that was what I liked. I didn’t know who said it, but I knew it must be some one stronger than all I was in the midst of. I don’t know where it came from, but it was like a strong rope to cling to. I didn’t stop to *think* if it was true or not; I *knew* it was, and I just felt I believed it. And then the darkness and the horror faded away, and that terrible fear went, and it all grew hazy, and I went to sleep. I can’t even now think what it all means, and whether it is for me or not, or how bad I have been; I can only think that one thing, that He will heal my backsliding, so if I die, Joe, you must tell them that. I felt I must say it now; it may be the last chance.”

“God grant it may not!” said Joe. “But it’s aye true, Robert man; and it doesn’t stop there, it goes on and says to bad fellows like you and me, He won’t only forgive us all our bad and evil ways, but He will love us freely.”

“Can’t you say a prayer?” said Robert; and Joe, kneeling by his poor friend’s side, poured out a confession of their backsliding and wrong-doing in simple language, and asked the healing of which they had heard, and the love so freely promised for Jesus’ sake.

Robert slept again, and Joe watched on. He had a new cause for thankfulness, a new and solemn joy, for he felt his friend was safe; and the thought that they two, who had wandered so far, and had erred

so terribly, should be sought and found and called back into the fold, seemed to show love so incomprehensible, so high, so deep, he could only marvel and believe. Joe felt like a little child,—his self-reliance was all gone, and his fear of falling and grieving this loving Father was so keen, that only as he learned to look and lean upon a strength greater than his own, did he feel that he could venture back again into the old circumstances of temptation and trial.

As Janet opened the door that morning, Joe met her, and taking both her hands, he looked down upon the loving upturned face, and said, "Thank God, he is safe!"

"I do thank God," she said. But she was not thinking of Robert that minute; her husband's altered look and softened tone told her that the answer to her prayers had come.

"O Joe!" she said, fairly weeping for joy.

"Ay, Janet woman, dinna greet."

"But it's just for very happiness," she said; and as the tall man drew his little wife towards him, she felt as though the weariness of those long years was worth the perfect joy of those few minutes.

"I think we ought to thank Him together," she said as Joe poured out his confessions of sorrow, and asked for her forgiveness for all the unhappiness he had caused her, and expressed his humble hope that he would be forgiven. So the husband and wife

bowed their knees together to give thanks for this great mercy; and neither of them forgot to pray for Lionel, whose hand had been the one that first had drawn Joe from the allurements of the tap-room.

The terrible pressure having passed away from Robert's brain, there was more chance of his recovery; but to all it was still a time of great anxiety. He was generally quiet, but at times the terrible fears would return, and then only words from the Bible could comfort him. Mr. Averno was more constant than ever in his visits, and no voice seemed so to still and to reassure the poor man. But a new foe soon confronted him: that night upon the wet pavement proved too much for his already shattered constitution, and just as all hoped he was taking a decided turn for the better, he was seized with rheumatism in all his joints. Joe and Janet were sadly disappointed; and, further, they knew this was no passing illness requiring only a few days' care; it might be weeks, and even months, before he could be restored to health. Both Mr. Averno and the doctor were of one opinion on the matter—Robert must be sent to the hospital. Careful nursing and good food were necessary, and under present circumstances these could not be obtained. Robert expressed himself ready to go, his only request being that Lionel might be allowed to go and see him, and this he was assured he would be able to do twice a week. He had grown strangely tender towards his

boy, and would always become restless if he were at all late in returning from his work. So with the greatest care Robert was moved to the hospital near by, and they laid him in bed No. 16, at the very end of the long line stretching down the airy ward.

"And now, laddie, you will come and sleep in the cot that has been waiting so long for ye," said Janet as they turned from the hospital gate; and the boy, who was feeling very desolate and alone in the world, thanked her and said he would. He went back to Mrs. Markham and gave up the rooms; and between them he and Joe moved the few things which still belonged to Robert round to the little house, where Janet promised to store them till they again had a home of their own.

Broomy felt strangely old and careworn as he looked round these two little rooms for the last time, and thought over some of the many events that had taken place in them. He walked slowly downstairs, feeling that another chapter in his life was closed; and then a great restlessness came over him—he longed to go away from every one. Janet was kind, no one could be more so, and Joe was very considerate; but in spite of all that; and in spite of the noise and crowd around him, the world seemed empty as he walked through the streets. The sense of loss pressed heavily upon his young heart, and for a time seemed more than he could bear. He turned his steps in the direction of the cemetery, and before long was standing



by his sister's grave. He flung himself down upon the ground, and his over-wrought feelings found vent in tears, as the wave of bitter sorrow passed over him. He did not want them back. Oh no! it was not that; they were glad and happy, and it was so nice to think of them so. He hardly knew what he wanted; but there was a great longing, empty feeling in his heart, and he felt as though he should never, never be happy again. He was over-tired, over-strained, the tension on mind and body had been too great for one so young; but comfort came at last. It is God's will that sorrow, however keen and agonizing for the time, should pass away. The lessons it has taught and its softening influence will follow those whom it has touched, but the pain and the aching will pass away. Broomy found it so afterwards; but as he wept by Alice's grave that night, he felt as though a shadow had fallen on his life which would never pass away.

The paroxysm over, he rose to his feet; and as he did so, his eyes were arrested by a marble cross on an adjoining grave. It was pure white, and on it was neither name nor date; but at the foot three words: "Till He come." He read them over and over again, and they brought comfort to his heart. "I almost wanted to die and go to them," he thought; "but that is cowardly. It seems to say there that it is His will we should work and do our duty, for Him to find us at it. He knows who's under that stone

if nobody else does, so He knows where I am, and all about me, though mother and Alice are gone. He suffered for us on the cross; and doesn't it say something somewhere about our taking up our crosses daily? I am afraid I have laid mine down lately; I must go and try again, for there is no telling how soon He may come." So hopeful and encouraging thoughts came, and once again life seemed worth living.

As Broomy left the gate an arm was slipped through his, and he saw Sparrow by his side. This faithful little friend had seen him in Tottenham Court Road, and noticing the direction in which he was walking, had guessed where he was going. He saw from Broomy's face that he did not want a companion then, but he could not bear to see him so lonely and so sad, and had followed him at a short distance. He had seen Lionel's sorrow by his mother's and sister's grave, and his heart had ached for him; and so, as Broomy turned to leave, he came forward to give that truest sympathy, a silent fellowship in suffering. They did not need to speak. Charlie knew Lionel was glad to have him, and Lionel knew that Charlie understood exactly what he was feeling. His friend was a boy of wonderful tact. In spite of all his drollery he had very sensitive feelings. He seemed to take a person in and understand all about him at once; and though tossed about in a hard and cruel world, he never lost this peculiarity. A kind

of sympathetic instinct guided his actions, and whatever else Charlie Baker might do, he never wounded a fellow-creature's feelings.

Lionel felt he must not be selfish; and so, as they neared the busy, noisy neighbourhood in which they lived, he roused himself to inquire after his little friends Kit and Will.

"First-rate they are," said Charlie; "actually they tooked in what we was talking about Christmas day, and if that little mite of a Will 'asn't gone and made that fellow in our court they calls 'Oyster' reg'lar soft. He says 'e's going to turn 'im into a cub afore Christmas, and I believe he'll do it. He's a plucky little chap is Will. You will 'ave to look sharp after some one, Lion; it takes near nine months to make them reg'lar strong and sure. I've got my eye on one; I intends to tackle 'im soon. We've missed you awful since you 'aven't been able to be about among us as usual; we can't get on without our king Lion."

"Nonsense, Sparrow; I think you are the king now, and I must be prime minister. You're ahead of me by a long way now. You don't know what a coward I am."

"Say that again, and I'll knock you down, I will," said Sparrow, doubling up his fists and looking very fierce. "Don't you go thinking that way, or else you will be no good at all," he continued, dropping into a serious tone. "Have you forgotten Christmas day already? Didn't he say in a sort of a way it wasn't

us as chose, you know? all we 'ad to do was to go straight a'ead and do our dooty, and we'd no right to say some one else could do our work, 'cause they couldn't, or it wouldn't have been given to us. Now, Bill Gray wants looking after—he fights shy of me; and Harry Tyler, nobody's seen for a week."

"All right, old fellow," said Lionel; "I'll be round to-morrow and see after them: we'll meet after work. I *had* forgotten; you must keep me up to the mark, Sparrow."

So for a second time it was given to Charlie to keep his friend from failing in his path of duty and sinking into a morbid way of thinking. He nodded his rough little head as he saw him turn away. "All right," he said to himself, "that's just what he wanted,—guessed it would answer;" and because he had no other way of showing he was pleased, he turned a somersault, and chased the first small boy acquaintance he met till he was out of breath, and then he wandered back to his young charges, without one idea in the world that he was more of a hero than every other lad he knew. His words struck home to Lionel. He had been lazy lately; and when he found how bravely and thoroughly Charlie had looked after his neglected duties, he felt thoroughly ashamed and humbled, and set to work to try and be more than he had ever been before to his "cubs."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### "FIGHTING THE BATTLE OF LIFE."



THE door bell at Mr. Raine's house was rung sharply on the afternoon of the day after Alice Franklin died, and Mr. Averne stood impatiently waiting for it to be answered. Mr. Raine was out, he heard; but Guy was in, and he burst into the drawing-room, delighted to see his old friend again. They had met several times since Mr. Averne had met his sister, and had renewed their old acquaintance with the greatest pleasure. Guy's bright, hearty manner cheered Hartley, and his earnestness and thoughtfulness underneath made him more of a friend and companion to the young man than many boys could have been. Mr. Averne hastily explained to him that it was his sister he wanted to see, and Guy darted off to fetch her.

Mabel's face flushed a little as she descended the stairs. Consciously or unconsciously she had been wanting him to come again; and though she told herself she was expecting too much in looking for him, she was glad to feel he was there. She saw at

once he had come with news of one sort or another; and she heard from him quietly of Alice Franklin's death.

"Her father and brother were with her?" she said interrogatively.

"Neither."

"Not Lionel! it must have been sudden then?"

"No—one was bravely doing his duty, the other—"

"Not drunk—oh, Mr. Averne, don't tell me that—not when his child was dying!"

"It does seem terrible. I think the story of that night shows in terribly plain facts how low man can be dragged. It should speak loud as a warning to keep quite clear of what all unawares may prove a precipice, over which the fall is so terrible."

His voice was almost stern with earnestness, and Mabel questioned him no further. He only told her so much as he thought fit, and then he made her promise not to go round to the court till he should see her again. Guy could go to make all inquiries, and he would himself report as soon as Robert should be better; and Guy, who had remained in the room, readily promised to do his part.

They had been so engrossed in their subject, they had had no time to think of themselves; only, as Hartley rose to go, they felt how much easier it made a work which they might share between them, and they parted with the old aching in either heart from

the feeling that it might not be so in everything, nor the barrier of reserve and silence they felt themselves bound to maintain be broken.

Guy was most constant in his inquiries at Black Horse Court, and was continually carrying thither little delicacies prepared by Mabel's kind forethought. It was becoming his greatest pleasure to go about the district with Hartley ; and as he learned more and more of the sadder side of life, his character strengthened and deepened without losing any of its sunny brightness. "It was my training time," he would say in after-years. "I learnt that it is worth while to take a little trouble to look at things in a fair and right light. It is no good, if you want to help people, only looking at their affairs from your own side of the question. Nothing taught me that so much as Hartley, when we went about London together. One minute he was all sympathy with an old woman with a bad leg, talking away as though all his life he had been an old woman and had bad legs. There was no preaching and talking at her, it all came from inside; really I believe she thought she had been looking at things in the light he put them, and she found herself unconsciously tracing a hand that was guiding even the events of her poor life. A minute after he was chatting away to a tiny girl or boy, as though playing marbles and nursing dolls was the sole occupation of his life ; and so on, all round, to every one. He never hurried them in their long talks, never wearied

them with good advice, and yet he was always saying little things here and there that did them good. I never saw such a fellow; I only wish I was like him."

Mabel was unfeignedly glad for Guy, and the wonderful stories he brought back were a constant interest to her.

"You *must* come and hear him preach," he pleaded at breakfast the Sunday after Alice died; "I do want to go so.—Father, Mabel and I may go to Mr. Averne's church this morning, may we not? It is so fine, and we want a walk."

"Guy, I have told you I can't go," persisted Mabel; but the boy would not give up, and finally Mr. Raine himself offered to go, so the three set out together.

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Such was the text that Hartley Averne had chosen for that Sunday morning. He knew that among his congregation that morning there would be some who were weary with sorrow. Lionel, and Janet, and Joe (the last-named, for the first time for many years, had entered the church that morning) were especially in his mind, and many, many weary with sin would be gathered before him, he knew. His own heart was weary too, and it was from the very depths of his own strong feelings that he spoke that morning, pointing the tried, and the sorrowful, and the sinful to a Saviour



who knew deeper depths of human woe than they had ever experienced, and had given his life for the cause of it all—for sin—and who lived to give joy instead of sorrow, rest instead of weariness, and to bring a full and free forgiveness to every sinful soul. Hartley had long ago laid aside all wish to become noted as an eloquent preacher, but the love of speech and the power over language which had led him hopefully to place that ambition before him, now proved of the greatest service. He could speak the deepest truth in the simplest way, and plain words and simple language were what he now sought, so that no one among his congregation might go away feeling the sermon was not for him, and his clergyman did not understand his need. He wanted to teach them so plainly and comprehensibly that they should forget the one who spoke, and only remember the message he sought faithfully to deliver.

Many hearts left the church comforted that morning, and not least among them was Mabel Raine's. She had been feeling somewhat weary and lonely. Hartley had seen it in their brief intercourse, and his heart had longed to give her the help and sympathy he felt sure would strengthen her; and now, though he knew it not, he had done so. He had spoken to his people words that had comforted him. In his longing that they should seek no rest but in Christ himself, he had grown very earnest, and nothing but personal experience could have given him the power

to utter such soul-stirring, living words as echoed in their hearts as they turned away. It seemed to Mabel as though he must have understood just what she wanted; and she felt stronger and more ready to go bravely forward than she had done for a long time.

"A fine fellow is that young Averne," said Mr. Raine; "he preaches remarkably well."

Guy, as usual, was enthusiastic in his friend's praise, and was going off into long stories of the wonderful things they had done together, when suddenly they met the subject of their conversation walking round the other way to get a little air and exercise before dinner. A little pressing and persuading, and they managed to carry him off to luncheon at Errelle Square, promising he should leave as soon as he liked. So he went, and the family life and happiness brought a feeling of rest and repose that did him good, and sent him out again cheered and brightened.

About this time Mr. Raine was very frequently down at Edgley. There was a great deal to arrange and see to before the house could be ready to receive his family; and after the idle life he had now led for so long, he was finding it a real pleasure to have something demanding his attention and time.

Mabel had been so glad at first to be going back to Edgley, she did not like to feel herself less pleased as the time for leaving London drew near; but she could

not deny that it was so. This little circle of London friends was such a constant interest to her, she would be truly sorry to leave them, especially as she felt she was of real use to them in many ways. And then Hartley's presence made it harder too. Sometimes she would picture to herself bright days in the country among the cottagers her mother visited, and the old friends of her early days; but the feeling that it would be lonely would creep back again, and the enthusiasm died away. Both her brothers would then be from home, and with her little sisters busy with their governess she would be left much to herself. But there was no reason to trouble, she would try and assure herself; all she had to do was to go straight on. For one reason she was very glad, and that was for Harold's sake. She saw that there was something wrong with her brother, but could not make out what it was. She wondered her father never noticed it,—wondered Aunt Caroline's keen eyes were closed to any change in him, and was puzzled by Guy's abrupt way of answering her if ever she opened the subject to him. She had lately met Lilian coming out of his room crying sadly, and in answer to her question had sobbed out that Hal had said he did not want her, and he never had done so before. Mabel quieted the child by telling her Harold had a great deal to do to get ready for the examination, and no doubt wanted to be quite alone; but Lil did not think it was that, and it was a sad

sorrow that Harold should no longer be so kind to her as he used to be.

Mabel was not long, however, to remain in ignorance of a greater trouble than she had dreamed of. Mr. Raine had returned to Edgley early in the week, expecting to be away for a fortnight. They had grown used to these frequent absences, and everything went on much as when he was there. Perhaps Mabel saw less than ever of Harold during these days. He never came into the drawing-room in the evening, and if ever she sought him in his own room he appeared to be so busy she did not like to interrupt him. One thing puzzled her, and that was the late hours Guy usually kept now. She could not believe he could be doing wrong, and yet till twelve or one o'clock she frequently heard him moving, and even later than that the light under his door showed that he was not yet asleep.

One night Mabel had occasion to go downstairs shortly after twelve to get some papers she had left by mistake in the library. The gas was still alight in the hall, and thinking how careless the servants were, she passed on. She had some difficulty in finding what she sought, and was slowly leaving the room, having extinguished her candle, when she saw Guy glide downstairs. She wondered what he could be about, but let him pass on, while she stood still in the doorway watching him. He went straight to the front door, and silently undid the locks and opened

it. There was a low murmur of voices, a subdued "Thank you" from Guy, and some one evidently turned away from the house, for there was a sound of foot-steps on the pavement; and then the words, "Again? O Harold! you know you would not dare do this if father were at home." As Guy closed the door, Mabel saw that both brothers were together. The younger led the elder forward into the hall, and then turned back to relock the door; then as Harold tried to move on by himself, Mabel saw that he tottered and almost fell.

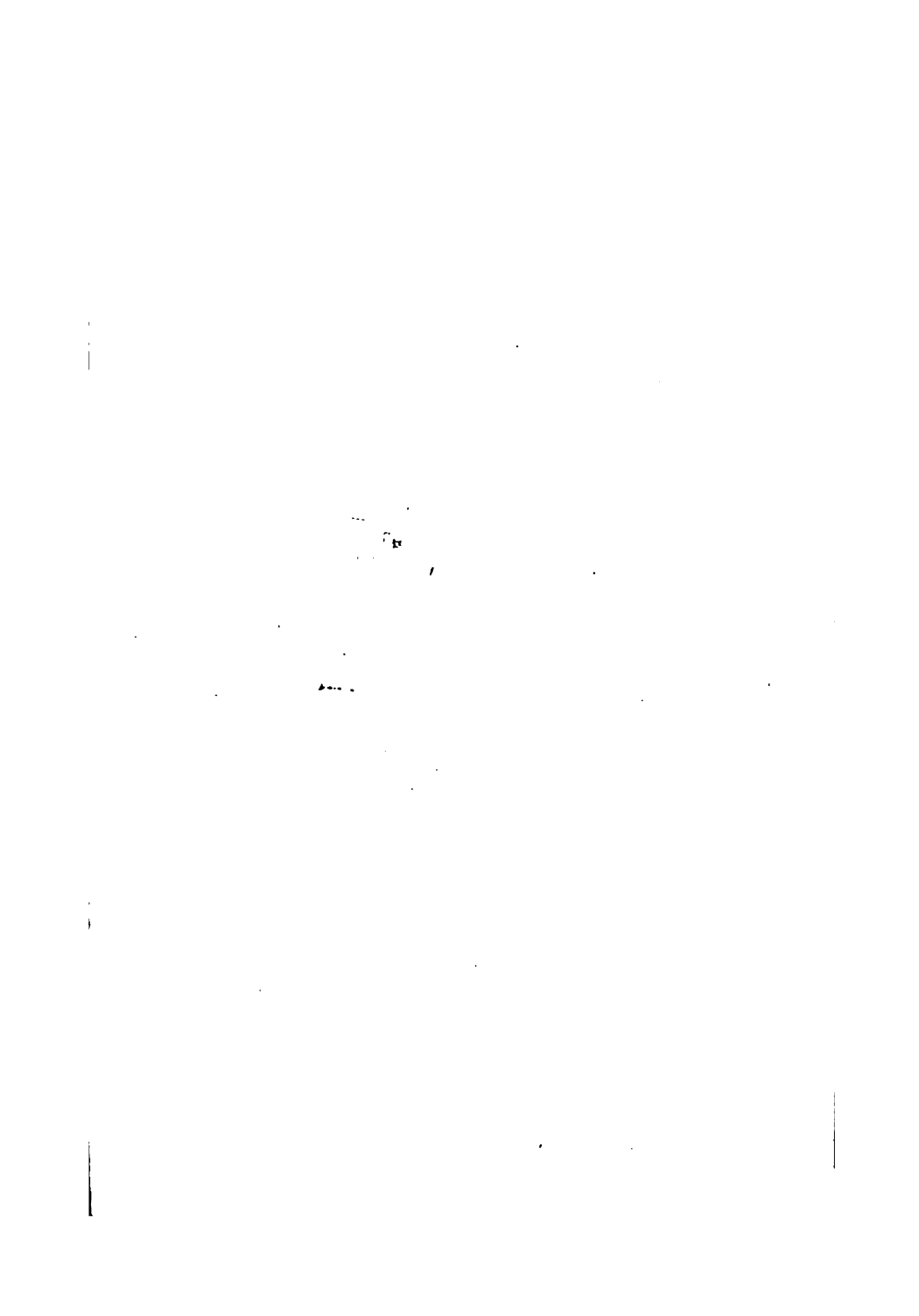
She darted forward to his side. "Harold, you are ill," she said; "let me help you upstairs, and bring you something."

"Mabel, go away. I had hoped to have spared you this," said Guy.

Mabel looked up, startled, into Guy's face. The real pain she saw there, and the distressed ring in his voice, frightened her. "He is ill," she said; "don't you see?"

Guy saw she did not understand, and thought, perhaps, still to spare her; so, changing his voice, he said gently, "Yes, dear; but you go away. You ought to be in bed. I will take care of him."

But she saw now. The flush on Harold's cheek, the wild, unnatural expression in his eye, and his confused utterance, told the heart-breaking tale; and Mabel thought at that minute her heart *was* broken. The colour all fled away from her face, life and





THINKING IT OUT.

strength seemed to die out of her, and with a sickening horror she turned to Guy in mute appeal. He saw, and his heart ached that the sad burden he had so bravely sought to bear alone and to ward off from his sister, should have come to her so suddenly.

"We must get him upstairs," Guy said, seeing action was the only thing for her just then; and she lent her assistance to guide her poor brother to his room.

Mabel left Guy to render him what further aid he needed, and turned to her own room. She sat helplessly down in a chair, and tried to think. Again and again the vision of her brother rose before her, and the cruel fact forced itself upon her. It seemed too terrible; she would fain have turned away from it. It did seem so hard that this terrible curse should have touched her own brother. She had fought against the drink only as an outside foe, never dreaming it could overcome one so near and dear to her as Harold. Mabel felt stunned, and she sat with her hands tightly clasped on her knee, looking down into her little fire, and trying to realize this new trouble.

Guy came to her as soon as he could, and even in this their hour of need the old habit was not forgotten, and their hands met in a tight grasp. For those few hours Guy assumed a new position towards Mabel. Usually, he unhesitatingly followed where she led, and looked up to her to direct him in every-



thing; now he found her looking up to him for help to be brave and to bear this, and he tried to prove himself able to give it. He stood by her now, still holding her hand and gently stroking her hair; but he hardly seemed to know what to say, she looked so worn and so broken.

"Mabel," he said at last, "I am awfully sorry you saw him. I have kept it from you as long as I could. We shall so soon be going from London now, there will be less to lead him wrong."

This woke Mabel up to a sense of what her brother had been bearing.

"O Guy," she said, "how selfish and thoughtless I am! Here have you been bearing it all this long time, and I have known nothing of it. Tell me about it, dear; it is better I should know."

Guy dropped into his old place on the rug at Mabel's feet. "It was not long after we came to town that he first began. Mabel, I *did* feel glad mother was not here then, she was so fond of Harold," and his voice trembled. "You see, he got to know a lot of London fellows at his tutor's, and they *are* bad, some of them; and Harold being young, they like to lead him on. You see, he is so handsome and clever, and talks so well, he easily makes friends, and they like to have him with them. I used not to care at first. I used to laugh at him, and tease him for being so weak. It was not till I heard that young Franklin's story I really cared to

get him right again. You don't know what a coward I felt that first day we went round to the little house, and I heard all about what that boy did for his own people, and for others he knew nothing about; and here was I, with my own brother going the same way, and never trying to help him a bit. I made up my mind then and there that I would not be silent any longer; so I spoke up to him one day, but he gave it me back, and I saw that would not answer. Then, you know, I used to go out after him in the evenings and find out where he went and why, till father said I must not; and now the only thing I can do is to wait night after night and let him in, and keep him from disgracing himself before the servants, and from letting father know. But it has been hard work, Mab."

The boy's voice trembled, and he burst into tears. He was indeed young to have such a burden resting upon him; and as Mabel stroked his curly head, she realized how bravely and unselfishly he had borne a part for which he got no thanks, and in which no one helped him.

"Guy, dear Guy," she said, "why did you not tell me?"

"Tell you? Why, Mab, you were the one of all others to be kept from knowing. It has been hard work sometimes; but since I have known Mr. Averne he has helped me,—not that I have told him," he said, answering a look in Mabel's eyes, "but going

about with him amongst the people has made me understand what to do and how to do it. And that boy Lionel, it's all owing to him, and to somebody else," looking at Mabel. Then dropping his voice, he continued: "Do you remember showing me those verses in your Bible? They finished me up. I saw it was really right then, not merely a caution. I think I know the worst it can lead to now, and I have learnt to hate it, Mab. You can't think how I loathe, how I detest it. I would not touch it for the world; and if I never do anything worth living for, I will battle against the drink heart and soul. I would like to take Harold where I have been. I would like him to see the end of it, and I don't think he would ever touch it again." Guy's face had flushed, and he spoke vehemently. Mabel had not known how deeply the subject was laid upon his heart; but she could not wonder, when one so near to them had learnt to love the thing they hated.

"Guy dear, I am so glad of this; but what are we to do to help him? It is for you to tell me now," said Mabel.

"I don't know, Mab; indeed I don't. We must be very gentle; but the worst is he won't see that to get over it at all he must give it up altogether. He gets laughed at tremendously for his weak head. That is what people always do. First, they give them everything to make them take too much; and then, when they are overcome, they laugh at them. You

see, Harold is not like some; he cannot stand much. They chaff him when he gets excited, and then he takes more and more just to show he can do it as well as they; and then some one has to bring him home in the state you saw him to-night. Oh, the shame and the disgrace of it! I should have thought even that alone was enough to keep any one within limits. Mabel, you don't know; it's getting quite hard to go out with him. We can't move a step without meeting some of these young men; and they smile among themselves at him, remembering what he was fit for when last they saw him. It is all I can do to stand it. Harold might be such a splendid fellow—fifty times better than any of them. After all, Mabel," he said, rising, "I am half glad you know, you will tell me what to do; and sometimes I used almost to feel as though I should give up."

"We must not forget we are not working alone," said Mabel gently. "Do you know, Guy, I sometimes think you and I miss mother more than any of the others, and so I do think we cannot be glad enough we both know God's great care for us. It would be so desolate to have no one to go to, to know what to do; and he has made it so easy to go to him. Lately he has been making the way plain before us. You see, even about Harold, you have been made ready in a sort of a way to help him. Three months ago we had neither of us thought about the drink at all. We are learning hard lessons just now, dear; but

for his sake we must learn them, Guy, and not shrink back, and we must help each other."

Guy kissed her again, and left the room. They were both sadly weary as they lay down to rest, and to neither of them did the way seem at all clear. But God was taking care of his children, and the prayers they offered that night were not unanswered. It was long past two when they parted, and ere morning dawned they were both freed from their sorrows for a time,—for sometimes it is through sorrow that "he giveth his beloved sleep."

Harold was, of course, not down to breakfast the next morning; but that was now a usual occurrence. Mabel's white cheeks attracted a little notice from Miss Raine, and Guy's wild spirits a severe remonstrance; but otherwise last night's doings were evidently only known to those immediately concerned. Guy was a puzzle to everybody but Mabel. No one could have guessed, to see him romping with Evelyn and teasing Lilian, answering his aunt in the most ridiculous manner possible, and quizzing Mabel, that he was the same boy who had talked so earnestly and sensibly last night. But Guy's spirits were unquenchable; it was a real trial to him to be sad. It was no forced gaiety that made him so lively at the breakfast-table that morning, but real lightness of heart, the outcome of perfect health and excellent spirits. He took up Harold's coffee, with his sunny face unclouded by even that trial; and if he was a

little sobered when he came down again, he shook off the feeling, and was as bright and as amusing with the children as ever.

To some sisters this would have been rather trying, but not so to Mabel. It was an unfailing cause of thankfulness with her that Guy could be so bright. She knew it never meant that he was forgetting: a word from her would have brought him to her side, ready to consult with or to help her as best he could. It arose partly from the natural buoyancy of his character, and partly from his childlike faith in the constant presence of his God, and his care for even the least affairs. He felt he might leave the difficulties in his hands, and go forward in the path of duty, ready to act when the time came, but till then to do without that anxious troubling that hinders so many.

He understood exactly what Mabel was feeling that morning—for had he not felt the same when it was all new to him?—and he followed her into her room without being asked, and began straight away: "Now, Mab, you are thinking round the wrong way. It is not one bit of good for you to go thinking you might have prevented this; you couldn't. It came upon him at school, long, long ago, and it has just been growing and growing. Now, what we have got to do is to stop it, and even there there is not much for us; for *he* must be the one to act, we can only help. Don't you see you must face the fact and

have done with it—forget the ifs and mights, and take only what is. You poor little thing!" he added, looking pityingly at her pale cheeks. "Why, what are you that you should have all this trouble? I say, Mab, I suppose it would not do to tell Avere this?"

"Oh no!" said Mabel quickly, though the same thought had been in her mind. "He must not be worried with our troubles; he would feel them as much as we do. He always was so fond of you and Harold."

"And somebody else too;—any way, I am off there now; I can do no more here. Harold is awake and getting up. You won't speak to him, I suppose?"

"I think I ought. You see there is no one else to do it. Father does not know, and we could not tell him. I think mother would have talked to him a little bit."

"So do I;" and he squeezed her outstretched hand and was off.

Mabel's heart failed her as she placed her hand on the door handle, but she went bravely in. Harold was lying on the sofa, and there was no need to ask any questions. The drawn expression of his brow showed he was suffering agonies from headache. He hardly looked round at his sister, and she was soon busy with eau-de-Cologne, gently bandaging his burning temples, and changing as often as required. She sat quietly reading whilst he dozed as the pain

eased, and was ready with a cup of strong tea when he finally awoke.

"Mabel, you are growing very like mother."

The words came almost involuntarily.

"Am I?" she said, turning brightly round.

"Yes. When I was a wee boy, and had these terrible headaches, she used to do just like you. I used to watch her in a sort of a dream, like I have been watching you this morning."

"I only wish I were her," said Mabel; "she would know what to say to you, and I don't. O Harold! I am afraid she would have broken her heart if she had seen you as I did last night."

Harold flushed, and Mabel went on, speaking rapidly for fear her courage should fail her. She just told him what she had seen, and spoke very plainly and affectionately to him. He was really grieved to see how he had shocked her, but he would not acknowledge that he was as wrong as she pointed out to him. He was more inclined to excuse himself for having been overcome once in a way than to see the truth of the very plain words she spoke, and with her help seek to avoid the danger.

"Nonsense, Mabel," he said, when she urged him to give up these friends and keep away from the wine altogether, for a time at least. "They are jolly enough fellows; and I must have a little fun sometimes. I could not break with them all of a sudden."

So Mabel was disheartened. It seemed as though



she spoke in vain; but she had not quite done that. Harold was not bad-hearted at the bottom, and he really felt very sorry and ashamed of himself, and for the next week tried to keep straight; but he had not strength to keep out of the way of temptation, and before many weeks it overcame him again.

"Mabel, Mr. Averne wants you to go and see Franklin in hospital," were Guy's first words on returning. Hartley had gathered from Guy that something special was troubling Mabel, and he judged rightly that some further interest outside would prove the best remedy.

Robert had been in hospital three days, and was only just beginning to feel any relief from his sufferings. Lionel had been to see him once, but he had hardly recognized him. On the day of Mabel's visit, however, he was really feeling better, and, propped up with pillows, was looking with some interest upon the long ward and his fellow-sufferers in it. One thing specially attracted his notice, and that was the very text that had so helped him in the darkness of despair, hanging upon the opposite wall, printed in large and distinct characters. He read it and re-read it, and as he did so, some idea of *what* his backslidings had been began to dawn upon his soul. Sad thoughts arose within him, and the blackness of his past conduct stood up to accuse him. His brain was not very strong yet, and the horror of

going through a second time what he had experienced that terrible night almost overpowered him, when he was roused by Mabel's voice at his side.

"You are looking at that text, I see. It is good to have anything so firm to take hold of; is it not? 'I *will* heal their backsliding; I *will* love them freely.'"

Robert turned, and did not fail to recognize his former young mistress; but Mabel's tone in repeating the text had opened it in a new light to him, and he turned to hear what more she might say. He felt that it must cost something to the One who forgave to pardon such as he, and he asked almost doubtfully, "But how can He?" And Mabel told of God's love through Christ to *all*. Her new trouble—so fresh, so sore—softened her heart towards those who had erred in the same way as her brother. She no longer shrank from this man and feared him. One great earnest longing that he might be saved filled her heart; and the love she showed in her tone and manner, when she knew how bad he was, led him to believe in the greater love of which she spoke. He had not come on to the second part of the verse yet, he had stopped at the healing; but as he realized the depths of sin into which he had fallen, he saw the depths of love that would give even His only begotten Son that such backsliding might be forgiven. But he was very doubtful and hesitating.

"It seems very wonderful, miss, and I will think

it over," he said; "but you don't know how bad I have been."

"But I think He does," said Mabel; and then she turned the conversation and spoke in Lionel's praise, and recalled the days when she had known him at Edgley, and spoke of their hope for return there. Robert listened, almost too weak to make much response; but it brightened him, and he was very grateful to Mabel for her kindness and trouble in coming to see him.

Mabel left the ward feeling all the better for the time she had spent there. Speaking to Robert had brought back strengthening, peaceful thoughts into her own mind; and seeing one who had gone so far brought back, gave her hope for her own loved brother.

Robert still had many struggles to go through. He seemed as though he could not get firm hold of these great truths,—they slipped away from him, and he was lost in hopelessness and despair again; but God sent one after another to help him back, and their words and their prayers brought hope again. The craving for the drink had also to be overcome, and there were wild implorings and beseechings for only a little, ever and ever so little, but just some, to quench the burning thirst that raged within; but there were firm hands to deny the longed-for glass, and in time the fierce thirst was conquered.

It was on Sunday that Lionel first saw his father

after he was strong enough to speak to him. There were strange feelings roused on either side, for memories of their long estrangement were present with them both. Robert was wonderfully humble with his boy, and asked his forgiveness for the injustice and harshness of his past conduct; and that made Lionel feel humble too, and he acknowledged that he had not always behaved as he should have done.

"Sit down," said Robert, gently, "where I can see you. You are like your mother, Lionel; how, I don't know, for in face and figure they say that you are more like me, but I can see a look of her every time you speak. Ah, my boy, I can't tell her, so I must tell you all I have thought about those last years." And the poor man poured out bitter confessions of remorse and regret at all they had undergone at his hands. "And another thing," he added, "they used to tell you you drove me to the drink by your fretty ways when you were small. Never believe it, lad; it was just my own doing. It grew upon me little by little, and I never struggled against it. I might have seen what I should come to from those around me, but I wouldn't; I loved it more than my own soul. It would be the happiest day in my life if I could hate it as once I loved it; but I can't. Thank God, Lionel, that you don't know what the taste of it is; and never, never go near it. The feeling that I should die if I did not have any has gone, but I

want it still ; I ache all over for just a little, and I don't know when I shall feel safe. I hate myself for doing so ; I hate the shame, the disgrace, and the sin of it, but I *can't* hate the thing itself. You must help me again, as you did before, or I shall sink down, down where I was before ; and there will be no healing for me then."

The despairing tone of Franklin's appeal drew forth his boy's deepest pity, and roused his strongest feelings to wish to help him. "Why, father," he said, "you must not give up this way. There's Joe, and Mrs. Parker, and Mr. Averne, and Miss Raine, and Master Guy, all a-helping you ; and you know, father, I always think mother prayed so much for us all that God remembers still, and he won't let us fall." Then he told him about that night when she knelt by his side and prayed for the two, father and son, little thinking then that the time would soon come when they would be left to fight side by side in life's long battle.

So the time passed away, and Robert slowly regained his strength ; but he never was the man he once had been. All the strength and independence in which he had once rejoiced were gone, and he was sadly crippled and enfeebled when he was discharged from the hospital. Lionel had taken lodgings farther up the Court Road, so that the old associations should be completely broken. With Janet's help, he had made all as comfortable and home-like as possible ;


but they felt sad and lonely that first evening, and it was all Lionel could do to keep bright, they both missed Alice so much. It was still a hard task to keep away the feelings of depression which from time to time overcame Robert. At such seasons he could bear no one near him but Lionel, and would turn with a touchingly clinging confidence to the one he had once so persistently ill-treated and avoided. Lionel proved himself worthy of the trust, and though it was a great tax upon one so young, he was unwearied in his watchful care.

Robert, of course, could not think of going back to his old situation, and it was difficult to know where to look for any employment. Mr. Averno, however, had foreseen this difficulty, and had already found a temporary place for him as light porter, which he persuaded Robert to take until he should be stronger. So every day Lionel walked round with his father as he returned to his work after breakfast, and again in the evening he was waiting to accompany him as he turned his steps homeward. The father did not resent this watchfulness on the part of his son, but rather welcomed it; for he was humbly conscious of his inability to withstand any sudden temptation, though it was his earnest wish to keep free from the drink. Thus Edith and Alice's prayers were answered; and, though shattered and disabled, the wanderer was brought back into the path that led to the same bright home where they were resting.

There was happiness in the little house too. Joe had never indulged like Robert, and though he too had a battle to fight, yet he had more strength of character naturally, and so the struggle was less hard. "I wonder how I ever thought anything equal to this," he would often say, as Janet and he drew their chairs beside the fire and settled down to a quiet evening. His wife would look up brightly at such speeches, and he would feel, even if there were no other reason, it was better to stay at home to bring a look of such rest and contentment to a face which had long been saddened by constant sorrow.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE LION AND HIS CUBS.

“UY, I want you to do something for me,” said Mr. Averne one morning, when Guy came tearing into his room in his usual harum-scarum way.

“All right; fire away. You won’t have me much longer.”

“You are not going sooner than you expected, are you?”

“That we are. Father wants us all to be settled in by to-morrow week.”

“So soon! Why, Guy, I shall not be able to get on without you, old fellow. But we must leave the troubles till they come. Now, to business. We are going to have a large Band of Hope meeting to-morrow, to start a branch of the society here, and I want you to beat up some recruits. That *protégé* of yours, young Franklin, wants to join, and he will bring some dozen boys he knows. Could you tell him of it? I have really too much to do.”



"And you look as white as a ghost. All right; I want some hard work," and Guy was off.

He managed to catch Lionel as he was coming out of the warehouse, and soon delivered his message. The boy was delighted; he had wondered when he was going to hear any more of this Band of Hope. And his curiosity and interest were all alive when he heard the meeting was really so near, and he and his "cubs" were invited. He thanked Guy warmly for coming, and turned off to the little house to ask if his father might spend that evening with them; and receiving a warm invitation for him, both for that day and the following, he dashed off to find him and convey him safely there. Joe and Robert were always glad to find themselves in each other's company now. The elder man had grown to feel responsible in some way for his friend's doings; and the old feeling of respect with which Robert had always regarded the fine tall keeper came back again as Joe regained his manliness. A day seldom passed without their meeting, and they did so to their mutual advantage and encouragement.

Broomy and Sparrow were soon making plans together, and finally parted,—one to go in one direction, and the other in another,—with the agreement not to meet again till every one of the "cubs" had been seen and their word taken to attend the meeting. The "Lion" was hailed everywhere with delight. It was some time since he had been a regular round,

and his young followers had plenty to tell and to ask him. Some, he was delighted to discover, had already acted upon Sparrow's Christmas suggestion, and had got some other boys on hand, whom they were trying to help right; others had even fallen back a little themselves, and needed a helping hand from their young chief; but they readily yielded to his persuasions, and none refused his invitation to the meeting.

The ten who had sat at the Christmas feast in the garret in St. Ann's Court had increased to eighteen when they met by appointment the following evening. Kit and Will were there too, so they numbered twenty altogether. The little boys had been indignant at the idea of being thought too young; and as Sparrow remarked, it did seem hard, when between them they had turned Oyster into a "reg'lar down-right cub," that they should not be reckoned of the number too. So Lionel carried his little lame friend, and Kit followed by his side feeling very proud and happy. Though a motley, it was a very bright group of faces that stood waiting for the door to open, and it would be impossible to describe the scrubblings and cleanings that had occupied the hour preceding this assembling. Broomy had insisted as far as he could upon clean faces and clean hands. "You see, we have got to write our names," he said, "and 'twould not do to make the book black." He could not do away with ragged clothes and tattered hats as easily; but

the boys had done their best, and it was with a satisfied look that he surveyed his forces and marshalled them into the large hall.

Mr. Averno was in the room, and looked up surprised at the continued stamping of feet up the few stairs and down the passage between the chairs; but when he caught sight of the two boy-friends bringing up the rear, he advanced and shook their hands warmly.

"These are not all your bringing?" he said incredulously.

"Yes indeed, sir," replied the boys. "But we don't half of us know what we are come to do exactly; only you said there was a lot of folks fighting the same way as we, and they'd be glad we should join; so we've come to enlist."

"Well, I am sure you form quite a formidable company in yourselves," said Hartley, looking along the row of happy faces.

"Guy," he said, as he returned into the adjoining room, "there is a sight in there to do one's heart good; you must look at them. Twenty boys headed by one—or two I should say, for that Charlie is a noble little fellow. You can see from their faces that some of them are a bad lot, from the lowest of our people, and their bare feet and ragged clothes tell of deepest poverty. I stood amazed to look at them. It shows what one can do if he be only in earnest. I have seen nothing to encourage me so much for a long time."

Numbers more had come flocking into the room, and many boys and girls had filled the forms and chairs by the time Mr. Averne and the lecturer came upon the platform. Some were staring about them with wide-open eyes, like our young friends, wondering what was going to happen; others were taking it more quietly, evidently being accustomed to similar proceedings.

Mr. Averne opened the meeting by giving out a song, which they all sung lustily from the leaflets laid on every chair. Then, after a short prayer and a few bright words, he introduced Mr. Blake to them. He was a great tall man, with black hair and black eyes; but those eyes looked very kindly down upon the children, and as soon as they heard his voice they knew they should like to hear what he had to say. He seemed just to understand his audience; he made them laugh at first. He knew when there are lots of children together they want to laugh a little to begin with, and then they feel sociable, as though they were one party and knew something of one another. So he told them anecdotes at first; very funny ones they were, but they all had a meaning they could not help seeing and they could not have forgotten if they had tried. Then he changed his voice just a little, and the merriment ceased, and he spoke to them very gently and very earnestly. He never forgot he was talking to children, so there were no long words or puzzling allusions to things they did

not know. The Lion and his cubs felt these words were for them, and their bright earnest faces did not escape the kind gentleman's notice. He was speaking of boy and girl heroes and heroines now. He said he knew there were brave little people before him, but he wanted them to try and go on a little further and see if they could not be braver. "I cannot think," he said, "how some people are content to stop short; they are glad to be brave, to be happy, good, earnest, sincere, and they stop there. Now I want you all to go out of the room feeling that you want to be the bravest, the happiest, the best, the most earnest, the most sincere boy or girl that ever lived, and that you will never rest till you are. If ever you think you have done something courageous, I want you to remember that you have not yet done *the* most courageous thing there is to be done, and so be on the look-out for the next chance that comes, and see if you cannot do something braver still. I think you understand me," he said, looking round. "I was telling you a little bit of what helps me sometimes. There is so much to be done, I want that none of us should ever think that we had done our part, and so give up."

Then he changed his voice again. These had been brave, bright words telling of the happy, hopeful side of the work; he would speak of the sad now. He knew something of the homes the children came from; he knew that if there was one in the room

whose life had not in some way or another been touched by the drink, it was quite an exceptional case. So with a reverent hand he touched the secret of their sorrow. They felt he understood what it was to them, these brave, bright little children, to have such parents and such homes as most of them had. He did not frighten them with dreadful stories; he told no tales of a brother's fall and ruin from the terrible sin. He knew they had learned from experience what he had become acquainted with only from sight and hearing, and the untold anguish those young hearts had suffered was not to be cruelly re-awakened by thrilling tales of horror and distress. He knew how despairing and helpless they often felt; he wanted to give them encouragement and hope, and so he put before them different ways in which the child may help the fallen parent, and perhaps after long patience and perseverance restore him. He was so gentle and sympathizing the children felt to love him, while his heart yearned over these young sufferers.

"But what is the good of our being temperance soldiers if we are not Christ's soldiers?" he said in conclusion. "You cannot fight this battle alone. I cannot; I should fall away and be bad, worse than the very worst of them, if I did not know that I had a Friend who was very, very near to me. Dear children, we must ask Jesus to help us in this work; we must tell him about those we want to save; for you

know, though he uses us, it is his work, and he does it all. I should so like you all to know that 'your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake,' your lives would be so much happier."

And then he sat down, and the children wished he had not; they had not wearied of listening to him a bit, and he helped them so. But Mr. Averne was giving out a hymn before they had time to be sorry, and they were soon all singing softly and sweetly,—

"There's a Friend for little children."

Then Mr. Averne spoke a few words to them on the business part of the evening. He said he had got a new book with a bright cover and gilt leaves, and it was all ruled for people's names. Up at the top of every page there was a promise written that those who signed their names underneath would keep. The promise said that, with God's help, they would never touch anything that could intoxicate them as a beverage, and they would try with all their might to get their friends and their relations to think the same as they did. But he had something he wanted to say first. He saw a great many boys and girls there whom he had never seen before; they had never been to his church, and never been to his Sunday schools; he was so glad to see them, he would like to come all round the room and shake hands with them and tell them how glad, but there was not time for that. But he wanted to say a few words

to them ; he could see they were all ready, as soon as he put the book on the table, to come up and sign their names. Now he did not want to disappoint them, but they must not do that to-night. It is a very solemn thing to make a promise at all ; it was a solemn thing for a boy or a girl to say to another boy or girl that they would certainly do one thing or another ; and what they were asked to do to-night was to make a promise before God, in his sight, and he did not think any one should make such a promise without really thinking it over before. So he had brought a large sheet of paper, and that too was ruled with lines for children's names ; and he wanted all the boys and girls he did not know, and all those he did know, who had never tried to do without the drink, to come up and put their names down there, and they would have a meeting that day next week and talk it all over, and try and get to understand all about it, and the week after they would have another large meeting like this one, and they should all sign in the scarlet book. The children clapped their hands, and when they had done he asked them to come up and put down their names and addresses on this paper ; and up they all came, one after another, and when they counted them up, they found there were one hundred and thirteen names in all. Then Mr. Averne said good-night to each one, and gave him or her a ticket for the meeting next week, and sent them out of a little door at the end of the room.



Then he spoke just a word or two to those who would not sign anything, and sent them away, asking them very earnestly to think it over, and to come again.

Then, when they were gone, he turned brightly to those who remained, and called them all to move up to the front seats. So they came trooping forward, one hundred and ninety-three girls and boys, and they quietly took their places, feeling it was no light thing to belong to a Band of Hope. Mr. Blake said a few more words to them, and Mr. Averne offered a short prayer, that seemed just to ask the very things they needed. Then he put the book on the table, and Guy fetched some ink and pens, and Mr. Averne read the promise over very quietly and distinctly, so that every one could hear, and he signed his name underneath so clearly, all the boys and girls could read it as they came up to write theirs.

"Now, who will come next?" he said; and there was a little hesitation. No one seemed to like to take the lead. Then there were whisperings in one corner, and the two words, "the Lion," were passed from mouth to mouth, and, after a little gentle pushing, Lionel advanced at the head of his troop. He had Will in his arms, and as he stopped at the table, he placed him in the chair. "I think the littlest of us should do it first, sir; and he is near being the bravest too," he said. Mr. Averne agreed, and Will's little white hand, trembling with excitement and

pleasure, was guided along the line, as he wrote his name under Hartley's—"William Baker."

"Kit next," he pleaded, as Guy held out the pen to see who would take it; "Kit always do what Will do." So Kit was lifted into the chair, and though everybody knew his real name could not be Kit, no one could ever remember his having been called by any other. "He was always curled upon the floor by the cat like a kitten, that's 'ow 'e got 'is name; and I 'specs if 'e's called by it, why, it is 'is name," said Sparrow, when they appealed to him. So he wrote it underneath his brother's, and Will put his arms tight round his neck for very pleasure; and of all the people in the room there was not one but had a strange feeling in their throat and tears in their eyes as they looked at those little brothers.

Mr. Averne put Lionel forward next, and "the cubs" looked on proudly whilst their leader wrote in a clear bold hand—"Lionel Franklin." His faithful little friend followed; and then Guy, taking the pen, looked up at Mr. Averne and said, "May I?" And the boys flushed with pleasure to see the young gentleman put his name amongst theirs; but Guy felt that those two had helped him more than any one else, and he should like to link himself with them in the pledge that bound them all to fight on the side of right against wrong. He shook hands warmly with Lionel and Charlie as he turned from the table. "It's a fine day for you," he whispered. So the signing

went on, one after another. All Lionel's young followers entered their names, and had a word of encouragement and a warm shake of the hand from Mr. Blake, as they turned back to their seats. They all had cards to take away with them, and little Will's face beamed with pleasure as he saw Oyster's shock head bent down over the book, and his thick fingers trace in clumsy characters a name by which few knew him—"George Passmore." The clock was striking half-past nine before the doors finally closed, and the children turned away with glad hearts, many to sad homes, some to street life again, but they lost that lonely feeling that so often kept them from trying as hard as they should, and thus they were braver and more earnest for that night's meeting.

Guy was very happy walking between Mr. Blake and Hartley, and the warm grasp of their hands as they bade him good-night did him real good.

"What a fine fellow!" said Mr. Blake.

"He is indeed. I don't know what I shall do when he goes away. Things are pressing heavily just at present; and to have one so full of life and hope about one is a constant encouragement." And as Hartley left Mr. Blake and turned into his own little lodgings, his thoughts dwelt sadly on the near approach of the departure of the Raine family. The truth was he was overworked, but would not acknowledge it. These sad thoughts that were constantly oppressing him now, this feeling of discouragement,

ment in his work, and dark forebodings of the future, were merely the result of an overtaxed mind and body, whilst he struggled against them as faults hard to be overcome. The real pleasure of the evening had for a time distracted his mind, and he had been able to enter into it and enjoy it in his usual whole-hearted manner; but now that it was over, the strain it had been made itself felt, and he could hardly drag himself upstairs. He leant wearily against the mantelpiece, feeling as though all life and energy had died out of him, and he longed for some hand to help him in this hour of need. But there was no one near.

Guy had meanwhile gone home light-hearted and happy. "I feel like the genuine article now," he said, as he tossed his card into Mabel's lap, and flung himself down at her feet to tell her all about the night's proceedings. And Mabel was proud of her brother, as he looked up into her face with his bright eyes and his open sunny face; and she felt glad that he was under an influence such as that of Hartley Averno.

Mr. Raine and his daughter were seated in the library the following morning, talking over plans for the approaching move, when Guy burst into the room, and exclaimed,—

"Mabel, Mr. Averno is ill! Cannot anything be done for him? There is not a soul to look after him."

"Ill!" Mabel said no more, but the colour died away from her cheeks.

Mr. Raine meanwhile questioned Guy, and finding that Hartley really was thoroughly prostrate, he volunteered to go round to see the son of his old friend.

Mrs. Averte was the only daughter of a gentleman living in Australia, and thus no relatives on his mother's side were within reach; while those on his father's were some in India, some in Scotland, but none sufficiently near for Hartley to send for them. Thus it was that, lonely and ill, he felt almost friendless in the world, as he awoke and found himself incapable of any exertion. Guy's face shone in upon him as a ray of hope, and Mr. Raine's kind attention in coming round himself was gratefully felt by Hartley.

Mr. Raine had not failed to notice Mabel's agitation, and he was thinking of it as he walked along. In past years he had often pictured Hartley to himself as his future son-in-law; but since they had come to London, he had so seldom come near them, the kind father was fairly puzzled. And now that he saw that his child really cared for the young clergyman, he felt sadly perplexed, and wished for his wife to help him to manage these delicate love affairs. It was with real concern that he saw how ill his young friend was, and immediately offered to seek a doctor and send a nurse, and to see that everything he

needed should be procured. Hartley gratefully accepted his offer for the doctor, but shook his head at the idea of a nurse, and declared he could take care of himself.

Mr. Raine looked round the dingy little room, and wondered why one accustomed to the luxuries and comforts of a home such as he had known Hartley's to be should choose to live in such style. He half-laughingly made some trifling remark to that effect. Hartley flushed painfully, as he quietly remarked,—

"I thought you knew my circumstances had altered since my father's death."

Mr. Raine expressed his ignorance of any such thing and his sorrow that it should be so. He was a very kind-hearted man, and he only wished he could take the young man to his house, and there let him be nursed, but the impending move would prevent that. So he told Hartley he must let him please himself, and let him treat him as a son for a little while; and putting Guy in charge, he hurried home.

Mabel was quickly put in possession of the circumstances, and offered to go herself and send Janet as nurse to Mr. Avere, while Mr. Raine went in search of his own doctor.

"So, so," thought the kind man, as he drove rapidly along. "Poor, is he? Ah! that's it, that's it. Well, well," and he sighed, "they are children yet, and

besides, I have no right to be thinking such things; but I am getting old, and one likes them to be happy."

Hartley opened his eyes after a lengthened sleep to find an unmistakable change in his room. The furniture did not seem moved, nor the pictures altered, but there was a feeling of comfort and order. Then his eyes were attracted to some lovely flowers on a table, then to some grapes by his side, and lastly to a little figure in a neat black dress, with snow-white cap and apron. "Mrs. Parker!" he said, perceiving at once who was the author of this change, and he held out his hand and expressed his pleasure to see one who had won his respect and esteem. He was rather troubled at her presence; but being told that Miss Mabel had fetched her herself, and Mr. Raine had said she was not to go away till he gave leave, Hartley rested content.

The doctor's visit was the next thing, and Hartley was listening with some amusement to the many directions being given to Janet, when the words fell on his ears, "And champagne, if he can take it; if not, a tea-spoonful of brandy once or twice during the night."

Hartley roused himself. "You must not prescribe that for me, sir; I am a total abstainer."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense!" said the good-natured man, "you may indulge such fancies when you are well, but illness alters everything."

"Not with me, sir. I did not sign the pledge last night to break it to-day. It was one tea-spoonful of brandy given in an hospital that brought back the raging thirst to one I had striven to save; and he never held up his head again, and died last week in delirium-tremens."

"Ah, yes! ah, yes!—well—but you are not in the habit of drinking; and if I order it as your doctor, you must take a little."

"You mistake, sir; I could not for the sake of others, I would not for my own sake. Where last I was curate, there was a young man no older than I am, and he was ill, and they fed him on brandy, and he recovered. But he had learned to love the poison, and they only brought him back to life to serve that demon drink, and then he died from it. Oh, sir, if you doctors would only think before you prescribe such remedies for your patients!" Hartley's earnestness touched the old man, and he insisted no further.

"I see it is a matter of heart interest," he said, "so we must give in; but plenty of nourishment, mind—beef-tea, jelly, everything of that kind; and I will be here to-morrow."

Hartley lay back satisfied. "I knew I should have a battle, but it is gained more easily than I hoped," he said.

The news of Mr. Averne's illness soon spread, and throughout the weeks that followed Broomy and



Sparrow made it a point never to fail in daily inquiries; and many a little bunch of flowers bought with hard-earned pennies found their way from the affectionate boys into the invalid's room.

Lionel's account of all his doings at the Band of Hope meeting had roused his father's interest. His boy always made a point of telling him about his friends and all their doings; but nothing before had so taken hold of him as this: he wanted to hear about all that had been said and done, and finally asked if he might not come and join. It seemed to be just what he wanted, he said; he had never broken his word yet, and he thought a promise such as this would have a more restraining influence over him than anything else. Lionel was puzzled; he knew the book was only for children; but he would ask Mr. Averno—he would be sure to know.

It was three days after Hartley had been taken ill that Lionel came to be helped out of his difficulty. He heard the boy's voice at the door, and insisted that he should come up to see him. Quick sympathy flashed out of the boy's eyes as he advanced into the room and saw his friend lying white and ill upon the sofa.

"Oh, Mr. Averno, you are not very ill; you won't be so long!" he said entreatingly.

"Very, I am afraid, at present; but I think health and strength will come back soon, only I must have a little patience."

"Oh dear! what shall we do?" said Lionel; and Mr. Averne laughed at the boy's despair, as though he were the only person in the world who did anything for them.

Lionel soon disclosed the object of his visit, and Mr. Averne was able to forward his plans. It was true the scarlet book was only for young people; but there was a blue book with gilt leaves, just like it, and that was only used for grown-up people, and nothing could please him more than that Robert should sign his name under the promise in that.

Janet was listening, and she thought she and Joe would like to sign it too, and then they would all feel more bound together than ever. It was Mr. Averne's co-curate who kept that book; but the meetings were held in the same large room, and Mr. Blake was going to speak to the people next Wednesday. So it was arranged that Joe and Janet and Robert should all go together, and Hartley hoped it would really be a help to them.

Janet sent Lionel away as soon as she saw that her patient had talked long enough, and he turned homeward with a light heart. It seemed now as though his father would be safe, and some of the heavy responsibility would be taken off him. Franklin had learned to depend almost too entirely upon his son to keep him from temptation. He looked upon his daily companionship in his walks to and from his work as the only safeguard against yield-

ing to the friendly invitations for one glass or more. He learned to regard his constant presence in his home as protection against any inducement to spend his evenings out of doors. The responsibility and the tax it involved thus laid upon the boy was almost too great and too constant to be well for him. He never spoke of this, but bravely did his duty. Indeed, it had become a pleasure to him; and he daily thanked God that it was given to him thus to help one so dear to those who had gone before, and now so dear to himself. He now felt that this step on his father's part would in a great measure relieve him from this incessant care; and that, when Robert took this promise upon himself, he would feel it became his duty, in God's sight, to keep it honourably. So it proved. Signing the pledge was the first step that Robert made towards regaining the manliness and self-respect he had so utterly lost. They were a very happy and thoughtful trio as they made their way to the table and signed their names in the book; and it brought a deep feeling of thankfulness to Robert and Joe to think that they might thus pledge themselves, not only to withstand the deadly foe for their own sakes, but also to help those who had fallen as once they had done.

There was another circumstance that contributed towards Robert's complete reformation, and that was Mabel's doing. She constantly met him, and it grieved her to see the very little progress he made

towards regaining perfect health. He had by no means recovered from the effects of his late illness, and his slouching gait and want of energy told of much weakness still remaining. It needed little pressure on Mabel's part for Mr. Raine to allow his former servant a fortnight's visit to the old place at his expense. So, to Lionel's joy, he saw Robert start by the London railway for Edgley. Mabel wanted Lionel to go too, but he thanked her and shook his head; he could not give up his place at the store, and, besides, he felt he was more needed by his London boy-friends than by his father just then. During Alice's and his father's illness he had been away from them so much, he had to make up for lost time.

That fortnight in the country did wonders for Robert, and sent him back again something of his old self. The sight of his old home and the familiar haunts of his boyhood softened and revived him; and when Lionel welcomed him back again, he wished his mother and Alice could have seen him. A longing for his old occupation came over him; and when he went up to Errelle Square to thank Mr. Raine and his daughter for their great kindness, he asked Mabel's advice upon the subject. He would not go back to the old mews, he said, but he thought he might safely try another. His health was so improved he was no longer afraid of night winds and damp air; and he did not feel as though he could

settle to any other employment. "And you see, miss," he said, "I have done so much harm in my last place to my fellow-coachmen, if God will let me I would like to try and do a little good now. I shall be laughed at at first—and no one knows more than I do that I deserve it—but I think I could live that down; and if I could only show any one the difference between the horrors of the life so many lead, and the happiness of such as I have now, I never could be glad enough. You see, miss, I think when I have known such things as I have known, and have been the heartless wretch that I have been, and which I hope, with God's help, I never shall be again—I think it is my duty to help those who are like what I was once to become what I am now." And Mabel thought he was right; and it was with a very thankful heart she heard such humble, manly words from one whom it had once seemed hopeless to approach. So Robert went back to his old occupation, and willingly entered a position of difficulty and trial; but, with God's help, he stood firm. He was always a sad man, and traces of the terrible trials of the past were written on his face. But he grew to be a respected man; and it was always acknowledged in the news, not only that Robert was a steady and a sober, but, further still, that he was a Christian man.

Hartley heard of these things with much pleasure and thankfulness, but still he did not get much better.

Mr. Raine had delayed leaving town for a fortnight solely on his account; but now this fortnight was drawing to a close, packing had already begun at Errelle Square, and still he was no better. Janet nursed and the doctor prescribed apparently in vain. Guy's daily visits brightened him for a while, and Mr. Raine's continued kindness was gratifying; but he remained in the same weak state, unwilling to move about or to interest himself in anything. His friends were perplexed; he seemed so unlike himself, and they did not know how to help him. And Hartley could not understand himself. He had been accustomed to fight successfully against such feelings as now overcame him; he felt totally unable to shake off the depression, and yet it was misery to sink under it.

"Guy," he said one day, when the boy came in as usual, "I don't know what I shall do when you go. You are the only person who does me any good; and now I shall only have you four days longer. You have been such a help to me, dear fellow, I never can thank you enough."

"O Mr. Averno, don't!" said poor Guy, looking distressed at such words. "I shall go if you talk so. I do wish you could get better. Don't you think you might if you tried?"

"Why, don't I try?"

"No, I don't think you do—at least not enough. I was telling Mabel so last night, and she said she

thought nothing helped a person to get well again so much as making up one's mind to it, and really and truly wishing it. I said I thought you had let yourself go; and she said that was cowardly, and she did not believe you could do so, you had too much to live for to be content to be ill. There are your work and your influence, and a whole lot of things; but do you know, Mr. Averne, I think it is true. I ought not to tell you this, though," he said, looking round, for he had been staring out of the window and speaking quickly; "I have no right to talk to you so."

Mr. Averne held out his hand. "Guy, thank you. Don't stay longer now, dear fellow; but come in again in the evening."

Guy went, and Hartley bent down his head on his hands. "Coward," he muttered, "selfish, thoughtless; and you can't bear to be told it." But Hartley's better self came back, and he faced his weakness. He looked at his conduct during the past three weeks. At first, he knew, he had been really ill, but he was not now. He was indulging feelings he should not have indulged, and giving way as he should not have done; and Guy and Mabel, two children in comparison to him, had seen where he was wrong, and one of them had been brave enough to tell him of it. He thanked God for Guy's plain words, and humbly he confessed his weakness, and sought strength to do better. He determined to begin at

once, and rising from the sofa, made his way to the window. The March sun was shining brightly, and it looked too tempting to resist, so, putting on his greatcoat, he went out for a short walk. He was terribly weak, certainly, but he returned refreshed and invigorated; and Janet, who had been rather alarmed to find her patient flown, welcomed him back with a bright face when she saw how different he looked. The depressed, listless air was gone, and some of the old bright expression had come back; but a trace of pain underneath showed that it had only come through struggle, and it was not the loss of the burden, but a brave resolution to bear that laid upon him, that now bore him up.

Guy had gone away vexed with himself; and escaping directly after dinner, he made his way to Hartley's lodgings and ran lightly up the stairs.

"I hurt you this morning, Mr. Averne, and I am sorry," he said, walking straight up to him; then pausing—"Why, what have you been doing? You look quite a different creature."

"Yes, don't I? and feel so too, thanks to you. Guy, you must not think it was because I minded that I sent you away this morning. I had got so selfish, so morbid, I needed rousing. It startled me just at first to see how far I had gone, and, Guy, it made me feel how very, very unworthy I am to fill such a post as this; it seems so wonderful that I should have been permitted to help these people when I am so



weak and sinful myself. But I do thank God I may and I am beginning to long to be about my work among them again."

Guy's face beamed; he had grown almost hopeless over Hartley's state, and it was a great gladness to him to see him rouse himself again, and he chatted brightly about the boys and the Band of Hope, and different friends in whom they took a mutual interest.

"Better, ever so much," were Guy's words as Mabel welcomed him back that night; and Mabel looked gladly up. She had grown so wishful to hear those words, but every night it had been, "Just the same." Guy had told her what he had done and said; and though Mabel did not at all like that he should have repeated her words, she was so glad Hartley was better, she did not trouble herself much about the means.

She was sitting alone in the drawing-room the next day, when she heard the pony-chaise drive up. Guy had gone out in it alone, and she looked up expecting to see his bright face as she heard steps approaching; but it was a taller form that darkened the door, and her face flushed with pleasure as she rose from her seat, and, holding out her hand, said,—  
"Hartley!" The old name slipped out naturally, and she did not even notice that she had used it; but Mr. Averno did, and he caught too the ring of true pleasure in her tone.

"It was Guy's doing," he said; "he persuaded me to drive with him, and without telling me where we were going, after a delightful time in the park he brought me round here, and then declared the pony could go no further."

"Yes; doesn't he look splendid?" said Guy, dashing in. "I am as proud of him as I can be. You wouldn't know him again if you had seen him the day before yesterday."

"Splendid" did not seem exactly the adjective to apply to the young clergyman, and Mabel looked rather sadly at him. His tall figure looked very thin, and the kind, grave face had a worn, tired look.

"You don't agree with your brother, Miss Raine," Hartley said, as their eyes met.

"No; but I am glad you are better." And then they fell into a quiet friendly chat about the approaching move and different things; ordinary, but still it was pleasant to them both.

Mr. Raine soon joined them, and warmly pressed Hartley to stay the remainder of the day, which he gladly agreed to do. Mabel's greeting had shown him she was more glad to see him than he had anticipated; and if God had given him Mabel's love, and through his not taking it she should have to bear what he had borne through late years, his would be the wrong.

The great happiness brought to him during those

few hours was almost too much for him in his weak condition, and he was glad to get back to his lodgings, with a thankful heart. It seemed so wonderful, when he had tried so hard to put this life-dream away, that it should be granted him now; and he forgot his poverty, forgot that he had said nothing to Mr. Raine, and nothing to Mabel, but with the old sanguine feelings that had distinguished him when a boy, he snatched at this ray of hope. Hartley had fresh reasons for trying to get well now, and it was wonderful the effect it had upon him. He managed to walk alone to Errelle Square the next day, for he felt he must speak to Mr. Raine. He told his story to sympathetic ears. His own love story had been a very stormy one, and it made him especially gentle towards young people in similar circumstances; for he still had too keen a recollection of the pain and misery he had then endured to willingly wound another heart in the same way. He was much pleased too with Hartley's behaviour—his honourable way of coming to him at once, and his brave readiness to have given Mabel up on account of his reduced circumstances, had he not discovered her love for him.

"You are making very sure of it," said Mr. Raine, half laughing. "I never pry into my little girl's secrets, but more than once I have had a suspicion her heart is more than half given away to some one; and if anybody is good enough to win her, it is you,

Hartley. I wish you every success, and I am sure there is no one I shall more gladly welcome as a son-in-law ;" and Mr. Raine laid his hand affectionately upon the young man's shoulder. He then went on to tell him that he must ask him to wait yet a little longer before he spoke to Mabel. He promised to arrange for him to come down to Edgley as soon as possible, but till then he requested silence on his part.

Hartley felt it a little hard, but he was so grateful to Mr. Raine that he submitted without remonstrance, and went with a hopeful heart to say good-bye to the party in the drawing-room. Harold was with his brother and sister, and Mr. Avere, who had hardly met him before, was distressed to see his haggard look and unpleasant expression. He soon drew him into conversation, for Harold had once been very fond of Hartley; and Mabel was pleased to see her brother brighten up, and listened amused to the vigorous argument on some knotty question into which they soon drifted. Harold was undoubtedly a very clever young fellow, and he could talk remarkably well when interested, so that it was a pleasure to listen to the two, and they rose from their passage of arms well satisfied with each other.

"I must get you to give me an arm home, Harold, if you will, for I am still very shaky," said Mr. Avere. "If you and Guy will stay for a cup of tea, I shall be proud to entertain you." So the last good-

byes were said, and the young clergyman set off with his young companions.

"Mr. Raine kindly invites me to come down to Edgley,—may I?" were his parting words, and Mabel said, "Yes." But her heart was heavy as she turned from the window; those last few days had made it so much harder to go.

But the day came, and No. 9 Errelle Square was left empty, and a bright face no longer looked in upon Hartley at his work, and a gentle voice no more read to Janet whilst she worked; for Guy and Mabel were gone, and those whose lives they had gladdened were left to learn to do without them.

The country air felt pure and fresh as the Raines alighted at the little station, and as they drove towards the house they felt that quiet happiness that comes from the sight and presence of beautiful things. A great feeling of relief came over Mabel. She was tired with the late few busy days, and rest would be very pleasant; she would try to do her best to forget the thoughts and feelings that had troubled her of late, and here, where her mother had worked before her, she would seek to do something for the lasting good of those amongst whom she was thrown. So she lay back in the carriage a little heavy-hearted, but contented and glad to be where she was. Guy was driving her in the pony carriage, and as Mabel looked up to see what was keeping him so quiet,

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she read the thoughts that were in his mind. "I am so glad to be back again in the place she loved the most," said Mabel. And Guy nodded, but he turned his head away, and Mabel understood the feelings that were saddening his heart. They all would miss their mother sadly in thus returning to the home she had loved so much.

The old friends were standing at their cottage doors to see the master's children pass, and their glad smiles of recognition and welcome soon drove away sadder thoughts. The two little girls had preceded them with their aunt and Harold in the waggonette, and were already running about the large smooth lawn as Guy and Mabel drove up; and as they looked again at the dear old house, they felt as though they had never really been home since the day they left those gates. As the evening closed in, the two brothers and their sister strolled over the grounds together. Everything was most beautifully arranged, and the silence and freshness after London noise and dust made it particularly pleasant to be there again.

"It seems almost as though it were wrong to be here, in the midst of all this, when there is such misery and suffering behind us in London," said Mabel, breaking the silence.

"That was just what I was thinking," answered Guy. "How the boys would enjoy a day down here! Poor fellows! they would not think they were in the

same world as Gresse Street. And Hartley, too, what worlds of good this would do him !”

“How you two croak,” said Harold ; “one would think we were responsible for all the misery in London !”

“So we are in some way,” said Guy, as Harold turned away, and, lighting a cigar, strolled down towards the river.

“I think I am more glad for him than for any one,” said Mabel, as they watched the retreating figure. “He will be safe down here, and he has been better lately ; has he not ?”

“Don’t ask me, Mabel. You know together we have done all we could, and by-and-by it must tell if it does not now. But I am glad, as you say, that he is here ; and I hope he will really work up for the ‘exam’ now. It comes off in a fortnight.” And then they did not talk any more, but wandered on enjoying the sweet stillness, and watching the purple shadows creeping down the hills and across the valleys. They had left so much behind, this could not bring them pleasure at once ; the change had been too great and too sudden for that.

Mr. Raine met them as they went indoors, and Guy’s enthusiastic expressions of pleasure, and Mabel’s quiet words of gratitude at all the arrangements, both indoors and out, satisfied his fatherly heart. The rooms fitted up specially for her were certainly charming, and the sunny little boudoir opening from

her room seemed all she could desire. Many little things belonging to her mother had been gathered into it, and as nearly as possible it had been made to resemble the little room they once had called hers.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### WOUNDED IN THE BATTLE.



UY and Mabel had left sad hearts behind them in London. Lionel wandered about disconsolately that evening, and finding that he could settle to nothing, he took little Will for a walk, much to the child's delight. He finally carried him round to Mrs. Parker, who always gladly welcomed the little fellow; and the three fell to talking over all that Miss Raine had done for them during the past few months, and how dreadfully they would miss her. The fond affection between Janet and Lionel never flagged; in all his difficulties he naturally turned to her for help and advice how to act.

"Is it not splendid about father!" the boy was saying enthusiastically. "Why, Mrs. Parker, I can hardly believe the old days are really true. He walks about something like a man now; and having got a regular place as coachman to old Mrs. Frost, he seems quite happy-like again. But he is so humble. He is always saying he thinks it is so wonderful he is kept

from falling, and it makes him feel it just isn't himself at all that does it."

"Ay, laddie," replied Janet; "and it's just the same with me. I sometimes think you and I are the two that have the most to be thankful for. I often look back to the day when we first met, and think how wonderfully the prayer we put up together then has been answered for us."

They were both occupied with their own thoughts for a time; and then looking up, Lionel said:—

"This is the one for whom I trouble most now," touching Will, who was engrossed with the kitten. "Sparrow is just wild to go away to sea, and the little fellow would be left so lonesome; and, besides, I don't see as how he couldn't be made well in some hospital. Folks do now-a-days; and I'd manage for Kit, if only something could be done."

But Janet shook her head. No hospital could stretch that little shrunken leg to its proper length; and she looked sadly at the child, and whispered to know about his mother.

"She may have her discharge any day now. Sparrow goes off to the jail as often as he can to find out anything about her. He's awfully afraid of her coming back to the children and leading them the life she did before."

"Poor bairnies—their own mother, too!" and she made up her mind to see what she could do for the poor erring woman. Words were sounding in her

ears which forbade her to hesitate. "I was in prison, and ye came unto me," she said to herself again and again; and she felt that any effort, any self-denial was little in comparison to the glorious reward promised to such services as these. So she went; but only found that the woman had been discharged some ten days before, and no one could tell her anything more. Charlie was very grateful to her, and thanked her very warmly; and she longed to do more to ease his burden, he looked so careworn and sad for those few minutes.

Charlie Baker never had his wish to go to sea. Mr. Averne was an early visitor at the little house one morning, and with Janet's glad consent he sent a message to the two boys to meet him there at the dinner-hour. During his last interview with Mr. Raine he had not forgotten his young friends. Their names were already familiar to his ears through the conversation of his children, and he gave Hartley leave to do whatever he thought would be wise for the boys, at his expense. So to-day he had come round to talk it over with them, and see in what direction their fancies lay.

As soon as Charlie found out at what Mr. Averne was hinting, he burst out in his impetuous manner,—  
"Oh, I want to go to sea; I do! You don't know! It's so 'ot and cramped 'ere! I never can stretch out my arms or my legs but what I 'its somebody; and I've never, never seen anything all water and wind

and waves, like they says the sea is! Why, I've never been nowhere, I ain't! There's always the brats to look after. I want to go away so awful bad. Dear! I do just wish I could grow! Why, I'm miles smaller than the Lion, and he ain't so much older than me neither! If only I'd been bigger I'd have been in the navy long ago!"

The contrast between the boys was certainly striking. Lionel was rapidly developing into a tall, well-made lad, while poor little Sparrow looked wizened and stunted by his side. But then, as he said, his mother drank. Poor lad! Mr. Averne looked pitifully at him, and wished some brightness could be brought into his life. Not that Sparrow was unhappy. Never did a lighter-hearted boy bound through the streets; but it seemed so sad that that should be all he knew of happiness, and the hard struggle for existence in London all he understood of life.

Mr. Averne did not try to check him; he told him how exactly he understood his longings, for he had had just the same when he was a boy. "The one thing I lived for then was to go into the navy," he said; and Sparrow's eyes opened wide as he listened in astonishment to hear one whom he looked upon as so far, far above him describe feelings exactly similar to those he felt.

"You really seem to know all about it, and feel just like me; that's queer now. And how in the

wide world could you come to London when you needn't?" said Sparrow, thinking such a step fairly incomprehensible.

And Mr. Averne told them. He gave those two boys an insight into his life's experience, because he knew it would do them good, and they loved and respected him the better for it.

"I say, though," was Charlie's comment, "doesn't it seem as though some'ow everybody was the same all round? Just to think now, a reg'lar gen'leman and a parson, such as you, having once been thinking the same things as me, as never 'as stepped out of London, and knocked about the streets all my life!"

"Yes," said Hartley; "it is just that that makes us feel a longing to help one another, and know the way to do it. And it is that that we feel when we think of Christ's life on earth. There never is a want or a wish but what he understands all about it. He knows what it is for boys like you to feel that longing for a freedom you may not have, and a restless wish to get away from all the misery around you. But if we want to be brave men, we must not let such feelings grow upon us. It is part of the cross we are to take up daily, and that is something we are to bear for him, not something we are to let crush us down."

"I see," said Lionel; "but, Mr. Averne, when he really does know all about our lives like that, I can't

make out how it is he should trust us with any of his work."

"That is just it, my boy. It is his great love for us that makes him let us do it. Now, when I was ill, and you both used to bring me those bunches of sweet spring flowers that brightened my room and cheered me up, I loved the flowers very dearly, but I liked more the kind thought on your part that they showed. I knew you brought them because you loved me. I think it is the same with our work for God. As soon as we love anybody, we are not content to remain still; we long to be doing for them the whole day long. God knows that, and so he has put a great deal of his work into our hands, and bade us do it for Christ's sake. It makes life a solemn, holy thing, when we think of it as his eternal gift, and seek to use every bit of it for him."

The boys understood him, and their faces were earnest and grave.

"Do you think it is my cross not to go to sea, Mr. Averte?" said Sparrow anxiously.

"I do think, Charlie, that it may be his way of teaching you some lesson by helping you to conquer this longing of yours; for I cannot say I see how it would be right for you to go away from your little brothers."

"No more don't I. Well, I'll try. But, oh! I don't believe anybody understands the feeling as comes all over me of longing to get away. The Lion knows

it was 'ard enough for me to go into the warehouse. There, though, I knows as I 'ave only to say I'm off, and I am as free as a lark. But if I reg'lar settles down 'prenticed to some trade, I must go on and on, and know I never will be free again. It's awful good of 'im, I knows. And p'raps, well it might be selfish to go away from them all. There's the Lion too, 'specs I'd soon come to grief without 'im; and, as you say, there's the brats."

There was such a wistful, pitiful look on his quaint little face, Mr. Averne wished he did not see it right to urge him on in what certainly appeared to be the path of duty. So he shook the boys' hands, and told them he must think it over, and speak to them again.

Charlie went back to his work in unusually low spirits. Life had come hardly to him these last few days, and the poor little heart was tired and weary. He could not think brightly of anything, and he felt home-sick, although he had no home worth the name, and a longing for some one to love him and treat him as their little boy. "I guess I'm pretty much of a coward," he said to himself, as he walked slowly away from work. "Now, the Lion, he's a splendid fellow; he goes right slap-dash away at anything he sees right to do; but oh, if only some one would come and take me away! Well, he said He knew about it; and if He knows one bit how miserable I am, why, He cares too, and so I need not trouble."

Somebody was coming to take him away, and Charlie was going where the sadness and sin would no longer trouble his sensitive heart, and longings for things he might not have would no more come. No one knew how it happened, not even Lionel, and he was standing close by. The great van had been packed, and Charlie, active as usual, was about to jump down, when some one pointed to a little rearrangement needed. He moved back to do it, and then, without anybody knowing how, he tottered and fell. His head struck against the iron-bound corner of a great box, and with one scream he fell to the ground. There was a sudden pause and silence among the men as, before they could stay them, the horses started forward, and the great wheel passed over him, cruelly crushing both his legs.

"Leave him to me!" cried Lionel, hoarse with terror and agony, as several started forward to raise him; and he tenderly lifted the mangled form in his arms, and bore it into the shed. "He isn't dead—don't tell me he is.—Sparrow, one word, just one," pleaded Lionel.

But he lay quite still, and there was no motion to show that life still lingered; but presently, with a quiver of pain, the large eyes opened slowly, and the expression in them startled Lionel. It was something above all pain and beyond all sadness that lighted up his face. "Lion, Lion," he whispered, "I don't want to leave you; but oh, it is nice to be going so



soon. Come soon." And then after a minute he caught the hardly uttered words, "Forgiven for His name's sake."

"Leave them," said the men, drawing back in awe from this last parting between the two who had so long been friends, and with that reverence all feel for sorrow, they silently withdrew.

Once again Sparrow opened his eyes and fixed them on Broomy's, as though he would say something; and Lionel bent his head and kissed his friend. The troubled look passed away, and a bright smile lit up his face, and then, in a few minutes, Lionel knew he was gone from him for ever. Joe alone drew near, and his tall frame shook with suppressed emotion as he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder and said, "Don't, laddie—don't now; he's happy now." But the words died away in a sob, and as the bell rang for work to recommence, he turned away, leaving Broomy gazing with a look of such agony at the still little form, it seemed as though his whole heart was breaking. He seemed stunned and unable to move; no thought of outward things came into his mind, no idea of time or place; only an agonizing effort to realize what this meant. It could not, oh! it could not be true,—the one thing that was left him in the world to love with his whole heart. They might have taken everything else, everything but this; he could not, could not spare him. So the boy knelt on, and his brain seemed at last to reel beneath

the overwhelming thought, and yet he could not cry.

At last they came to take the body away, and by Joe's request it was carried into his house. Lionel followed, and sat down by the fire there in the same stupor of sorrow. The little boys were fetched, but neither Will's pitiful wailing nor Kit's startled questioning could arouse him. He told them how it had happened; but his voice was hard and stony, and though he did not fail to make himself useful to Janet as usual, he moved about as if in a dream. He let Will climb upon his knees, and gently caressed the sorrowing child, but the fixed look did not pass from his face; and when the little boys were put to bed, he remained motionless in his seat. And then Janet tried what she could do, but he kissed her very tenderly, and looking down upon her, said, "It is good of you, Mrs. Parker, but I think you must leave me to bear this by myself for a little; I hardly understand it yet." She looked up full of motherly sympathy; but she said no more, for she saw it was grief beyond human aid.

They sent to tell Franklin, and he came round to fetch his boy home, his heart full of sympathy for the one so suddenly bereaved and sorrowful for the one lost. Robert had never forgotten Charlie's unselfish watch over him the night that Alice died; and he had learned to have a very fatherly feeling towards the bright, quaint boy so constantly his son's com-

panion. He held out his hand to Lionel as he entered the room, and it was taken gratefully for the sympathy it expressed ; but he would not go home with him—he would sleep on the hearth-rug if Janet would let him, and they did not oppose his wish. But Lionel did not sleep that night; one question rang through heart and brain, “ Why, oh why did Sparrow die ? ” and there was no answer, only the silence of death’s mystery, the empty yearning for that irrecoverably gone.

The morning came, and Lionel did not offer to go, so they let him be ; and as soon as Joe had left, and the little boys were playing in the yard, Lionel turned to Janet : “ I must see him again.”

Janet gave him the key of the little room where they had laid Charlie ; and Lionel went upstairs, the hard, stony feeling of sorrow pressing sorely on his heart. But he started as he entered ; and having closed the door with one convulsive sob, he threw himself on his knees and gave way entirely. The sight of his little friend’s face had brought back his right feelings again. Sparrow’s expression had always been wistful and puzzled ; there was always a little pucker of care upon his forehead, and when he was grave you would have called it a sad little face. But now the creases were smoothed away, and in the look of perfect peace and joy that rested upon the calm, white forehead, his last words seemed to be written.

"O Sparrow, Sparrow!" sobbed his heart-broken friend, "I have been wanting you back, and thinking you didn't want to die, but now I see you are glad. You have got somewhere I know nothing of what it is like, and seen something I have no idea of; and you are happy, happier than ever we were here, though we have been happy together sometimes. O Charlie, my little lad, how shall I do without you!"

So the boy wept on, and the thought of the long years that lay before him ere he could again meet his friend seemed terrible. A longing for the rest and peace that Charlie was enjoying came over him, and he would gladly have laid down beside him, and go where he had gone.

The door had opened without his hearing it, and a gentle hand took his, and a voice trembling with emotion said, "Shall we pray?" Lionel knew that hand and that voice, and his wild sorrow calmed before it; and as he knelt by Mr. Averne's side, he almost felt as though he had never known what prayer was before. It was so sweet to tell all the sorrow out, as he did, to One who understood it all; and Lionel learned how very near the Master draws to his servants in hours of desolation and bereavement. He rose comforted and subdued.

"I cannot help thinking of his words yesterday," Mr. Averne said; "there was such an intense longing to go away in them, a sort of pining after rest and love; and now he is satisfied, we cannot doubt that."

"No, oh no! it is not that. I would not have him back. It is just no end of a comfort to know he is where nothing can hurt him now. I used often to think he could not grow up; only I would put away the thought, it was too terrible. But you don't know how he cared about things. You see, we knew each other through and through, and he did not mind my knowing, though no one else might guess. After that Christmas day when he heard you, and began to think differently, he used to mind so terribly about people doing wrong. He could not bear that people should grieve Him; and though he never would say anything much, there would come a look all over his face as though he were hurt somewhere. When the men would use bad words, and say awful things, I used to notice it. And now that won't happen to him no more. But, oh! what shall I do?"

Mr. Averne's own eyes were full of tears as he drew the boy from the room. Charlie had always been a great favourite with him, and he felt he too should miss the bright little fellow. "I think you and I have something to thank God for very much in our little friend," said Mr. Averne, as he walked away with Lionel. "He has used both of us to lead that dear boy to Himself."

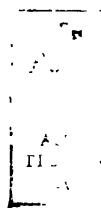
Lionel was thinking of that too; and then Mr. Averne encouraged him to talk of the days that were gone, knowing it would bring its own relief, so he told story after story of their past life.

There was universal sorrow among the cubs. The Lion was always their hero and their leader, he had their respect and unhesitating devotion; but perhaps Charlie had won most of their love. "He seemed to care so terrible," they would say, "we was reg'lar afraid to say a bad word when he was near. He would look up as though we had kicked him, and we couldn't bear to hurt the little chap so." Neither were his fellow-workmen in the store indifferent to his loss. Though in his loneliness he had called himself a coward, there were numbers there to testify to the opposite. He made them feel they wanted to be better than they were, they would say. He did not come down hard upon them for the wrong they did, but he made them feel they were not content with their present low standard of life. They began to wish to leave off the drink, and to drop the habit of swearing. He would get to make friends with them, and would look in at their homes sometimes, and they would wish when he was gone that they could make them better and brighter; and he sometimes went further, and made them see God wished it too. In some, these wishes had grown into actions, and many a mother was thankful for the unknown influence that had changed her boy into something gentler and nobler than he was before; and among the wives there was many a grateful heart for some unknown voice that had spoken a word of warning to her husband when he was going wrong, and words

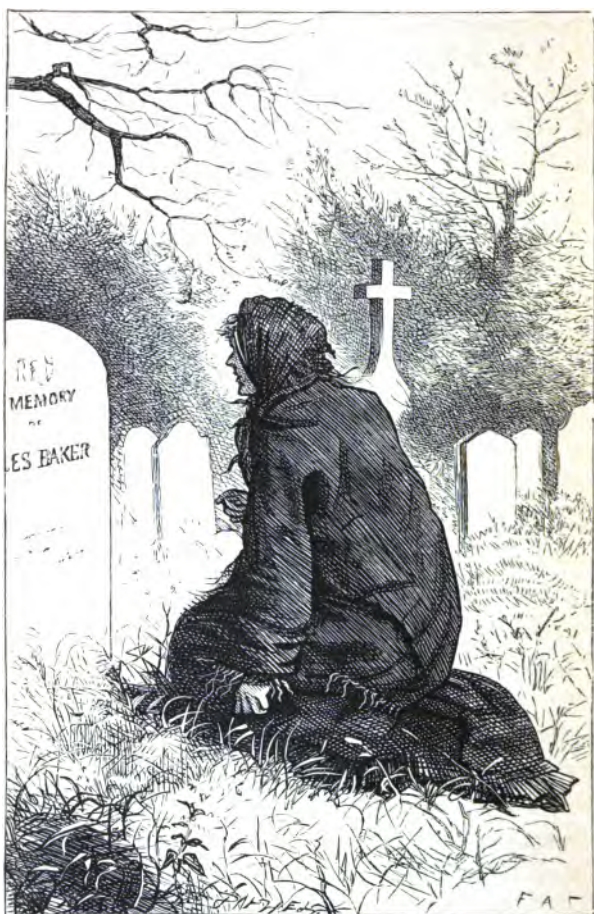
of encouragement when he sought to go right. Sparrow and Broomy had worked into each other's hands. The younger boy generally broke the ice, and then he would hand over his *protégés* to Lionel to follow them up; and though they met with rough words and sullen rebuffs at times, many gladly welcomed their friendship, and became the better for their influence. So there were many mourning hearts for little Charlie Baker.

Mr. Averno undertook the funeral service; and when they carried him out to the cemetery many followed him to the last resting-place. All the cubs were there, and from the warehouse many boys and men had obtained leave to attend the funeral of one who had been called so suddenly from their midst. The beautiful service, read with all the feeling and sympathy that were filling Mr. Averno's heart, was full of comfort for the mourners. He spoke a few words to them before they dispersed, just touching on the life of the one who was gone as an instance of how, in the midst of all that was adverse and hindering, this little lonely boy could live earnestly and faithfully before his God; and he pleaded with them to choose as their Master the One this little lad had tried to please—like him to find such a new meaning in life, such peace in death, because he knew his sins were “forgiven for His name's sake.”

There were few hearts that left the cemetery untouched, and old resolves sprang into new life as they







AT CHARLIE'S GRAVE.

thought of the one who was gone. They wanted to show their respect and love for his memory, so they clubbed together and had a stone put up to mark the spot where he lay. Nobody knew his birthday, not even Lionel, so they only put his name, and underneath the date of his death the words,—

“Little children, your sins are forgiven you for his  
name's sake.”

Thus in death and in life his testimony was the same.

Long years after, Mr. Averno was summoned to the death-bed of a poor woman in hospital, and they told him she was Charlie's mother. Late one afternoon, wretched and ragged, for very fear of going anywhere else she had crept into the cemetery grounds, and as her aching limbs failed her, dropped down exhausted by this stone. The morning air and sunshine roused her from her slumber, and as she looked around bewildered and afraid, her eyes rested on Charlie's grave and Charlie's name. An expression long a stranger to those disfigured features crept over her face, and tears started to those long-dried eyes, as she read over and over again the name there carved. It was her name and her little boy's name, and he had died so long ago, and yet she had lived on, careless of him, careless of herself; and now as she looked up into the blue sky she felt he was there and she here, and never, never would she see the child she once had loved again. Then she turned back to the stone and

read on, and as some of the pity and the love dawned on her soul she could not withdraw her eyes. He believed it; might not she? But the poor brain could not sustain the thought, and they found her lying insensible there, and carried her to the hospital. She never came fully round again; and when she spoke it was only to repeat over and over again the one sweet text she had seen on her boy's gravestone. When they told her it might be true for her, a faint smile would dawn upon her face. She was nothing but a wretched ruin now, her brain all scorched away and her mind deadened by the fiery poison. She knew it too; but still some power to realize a love that could pardon even such as she seemed given to her, and those who watched felt that she at last was amongst those "forgiven."

Charlie's death completely altered Lionel. It seemed as though all the boyishness died out of him, as though he had lived and learned so much, and he grew graver and quieter than he had ever been before. No one ever thought of calling him Broomy again; and though at first his friends felt sorry, they did not feel so long. There was no gloominess, no depression about him, only life had become more earnest and solemn, and he could not look at things as he had done before. The old bright, hearty way never left him, and with the little boys he would romp as merrily as ever, but an increased manliness marked his behaviour. Though he never allowed himself to

brood over his sorrow, his little friend was seldom absent from his thoughts, and an empty, lonely feeling reigned over everything for a time.

Mr. Averne wrote a hurried note down to Guy, and the letter, full of warm, true sympathy, that Lionel shortly received from him, comforted and gratified him; but more so a little note enclosed from Mabel.

The rooms in St. Ann's Court were given up immediately, and the little boys were sheltered by Janet and Joe until an arrangement could be made to provide for them. But those few days considerably affected any such arrangement. Joe and Janet felt that the constant presence of such little people as these was the one thing wanting to make their home complete. So when Mr. Averne came to speak about removing them, Janet spoke out, and said that if no one else came to claim them she and her husband had determined to keep them. No one could offer any objection to this; and as Will sat on Joe's knee listening to the ticking of his great watch, and Kit helped Janet to put away the tea things, the kind pair felt that the sacrifices they would be required to make would be amply rewarded; and the little boys, for their part, felt as though they had never before known what home was. They both mourned long and deeply for their brother, and little Will especially carried through life a deep affection and loving reverence for his memory; and in an atmosphere of love and gentle-

ness they soon blossomed out in a way they never could have done in St. Ann's Court.

Lionel, with his father's consent, gave up his position in the warehouse, and sought employment elsewhere. Mr. Raine offered him a place upon his estate, and a thrill of pleasure ran through the lad as he thought of an out-door life in the free fresh air. He did not decide at once, but when he did, it was to decline. It was not an easy thing to do, but he felt it was right; and, as Charlie often said, "When the Lion sees his duty clear, away he goes, and I don't think any one could stop him." He did accept a kind offer to spend a week at Edgley; and lodging in one of the pretty cottages, wandering day after day among the sights and sounds his mother had loved, the first intensity of his sorrow passed away. Mabel was very, very kind to him, and Guy's shy but true sympathy was gratefully accepted. Again Mr. Raine pressed him to take up his abode amongst them, but he firmly declined, though it was harder now that he knew more of what he was giving up. He felt his father was his first duty in life; and though, since he had learned to trust in a higher power than his own, he was bravely resisting every temptation, yet Lionel could not but feel that his constant companionship and his presence in the home contributed in a large measure towards this end. Then there were "the cubs." It was lonely work now, and often very disheartening; but he felt that

it was God's work, and that he had intrusted it to him. He saw that very plainly; and now that the partner of all his disappointments and successes was gone, it was not for him to lay down his leadership, but rather to go forward all the more self-denyingly and perseveringly. Then amongst his fellow-workmen and boys he had not failed to be of use; and he felt that in London there was more reason than anywhere else to wage the endless warfare against the drink. So, standing on the borders of manhood, with two paths lying before him, Lionel prayerfully and deliberately chose the hard London life; and he never regretted his choice. His heart might often be wounded by the repulses of those whom he sought to help, his hopes often bitterly disappointed; but he thought it more worth while to be saddened and grieved, and do some little good in the midst of much evil, than to live an easier, less wearing life, ignorant of the suffering and the misery and unburdened by a brother's woe. Mabel thought he was right, and so did Guy; and if he turned aside to dash away a tear as he bade them good-bye and left Edgley, it was only because he then realized how hard it had been to make the resolution, not because he faltered in it.

Mr. Averno, too, strengthened him in his purpose, so he settled down to London life again; and as he became more and more engrossed in the work of helping others, he grew and developed into one of those large-hearted, sympathetic men who carry

such an influence for good wherever they go. His father was rather anxious he should become a carriage-builder, and Janet and Joe urged him either to enter some trade as an apprentice, or to seek a situation in some establishment where he would be likely to rise; but he had come to a different decision. "It is for those workmen of ours that I feel the most sorry," he would say. "As they come pouring out of their different places of work they all seem to go one way, into the nearest tavern. I sometimes think, though I might not do much, I might perhaps do some good if I threw in my lot with them; and I feel it so strongly, I think perhaps it may be the way I can best do His will. I talked it over with Charlie often, and he seemed to think it was right." So the matter was decided; and though some were disappointed, and thought that with his capabilities and winning manners the boy might have looked higher, none felt that he had lowered himself by the path in life that he chose. Thus Lionel became a bricklayer; and if his spirit sometimes chafed beneath the monotony of his work, and the conversation and lives of those around him often proved wearisome, he sought to check the feeling, and to work earnestly for the right cause in what he felt was the right path; and he had his reward.

## CHAPTER XX.

QUI PATITUR VINCIT.



THE time for Harold's examination drew near, and at last the day arrived when he must go to London. Mabel turned back with a heavy heart from the door as she waved a last farewell to the two brothers. She knew she might not trust him alone amidst all the temptations that would beset him during the ensuing fortnight. She had asked that Guy might go with him, but Mr. Raine had not seen it well. She had spoken earnestly with Harold the night before, but he had laughed lightly at her anxiety, and had persistently shunned her gentle pleadings; yet as he sat that night amidst the old scenes, with the old temptations surrounding him, her sweet wistful face rose up before him, and words she had spoken long ago rang again in his ears, "Harold, for mother's sake," and the trembling tones in which she had pleaded the previous night, "If not for mother's, for Christ's sake, dear." But they called him gloomy and dull, and he drowned such thoughts, and plunging heart and soul



into the passing pleasure, he won bursts of applause by his unusually sparkling wit and brilliant conversation. Guy, too, had said a word of warning; but Harold had hardened his heart to his brother's voice, and throwing off all restraining influences, strove to follow his own wilful way.

The news of little Charlie's death had reached Edgley previous to this, and its suddenness had affected both brother and sister; but neither could grieve for the one who was gone. They had caught a glimpse of the quick sensitive feeling underlying his droll ways, and they had often thought how hard life would be with all its pains and cares to one so tender of heart. Together they planned Lionel's visit, and arranged everything for his comfort and enjoyment. Then another wish came into their minds, which occupied their spare time and thoughts for a while. They heard of Mr. and Mrs. Parker's kindness to the two little boys, and they began to think that the faithful pair were ageing now, and London life was becoming trying to them both, so together they persuaded their father to re-engage his former servant. There was work on the estate for which Joe would still be suitable, and the rose-covered lodge where once the Franklins lived was waiting for an occupant. Very tender towards Mabel, now that he felt the time was soon coming when he should be called to part with her, Mr. Raine readily granted her request, and she

gladly wrote to tell her friends of the arrangement.

Neither Joe nor Janet had the least hesitation in accepting it. They felt at once that it was God's provision for them, and for their little boys' sake and their own they thankfully prepared to leave the little house. So again Lionel was called to part with some he loved, and he missed Janet's motherly kindness, and Joe's companionship for his father, but more than all he missed his little lame friend. "You must come and live with me altogether some day, Will," he said, as he placed the child in the railway carriage, and the tight squeeze from two little arms pressed warmly round his neck showed that Charlie's little brother was still very faithful to his "king."

They all met with a kind welcome at Edgley; and the click of Will's crutch upon the firm road, and the sight of Kit's pale face, soon won friends for them among the rosy village children. Their delight was unbounded at all the country beauties around them, and Will's original remarks and Kit's quiet enjoyment were very refreshing. They soon began to inquire where the Band of Hope meetings were, and finding there were none, they went in great trouble to Janet, who confiding it to Mabel, arrangements were soon set on foot for the formation of a branch. Will could talk to the children by the hour about it, and they used to listen partly because he was small and lame, and partly because he came from

London and could tell such lots of anecdotes ; so he won many over to his side, and the little boy took his place as the first temperance worker in Edgley. Their brother's name was often on their lips ; but Janet had taught them to think of him as so happy where he had gone, they never wished him back, only they hoped he knew of all the glad things that had happened to them.

Guy had acquainted Mr. Averno with Harold's intended visit to London, and the young clergyman did not neglect to invite his friend to meet him, and tried to contrive in different ways to see him. This he only succeeded in doing the second day after his arrival, and then Harold told him that he had just received a telegram from his father, stating that he had been summoned to the Continent on business, and must leave that morning.

Hartley's face fell. He had been growing restless to hear from Mr. Raine, and longing for his permission to go to Edgley ; now he felt that his hopes must be indefinitely deferred. Towards evening he received a pencil note from Mr. Raine, written in the express train on his way to the steamer. It ran as follows :—

“DEAR AVERNE,—I have just been summoned to Berlin upon important business, and am obliged to leave without delay. I am more sorry for your sake than for my own ; it should not have happened could

I have foreseen it, but now it is unavoidable. As soon as I return I will push forward my affairs as rapidly as possible, and then I hope we may welcome you at Edgley.—Yours very truly,

“HAROLD L. RAINE.”

It was trying, but still it was only to wait a little longer; and after having fought so long against hope, Hartley found it easy work to wait with hope. He sought Harold again the following evening to hear what further tidings he could give, but he was out, and in spite of every effort, Hartley did not see him again.

Harold meanwhile was not progressing satisfactorily with his examination. He had been relying too entirely upon his natural talents, and had taken so little trouble to prepare himself, that even his own heart failed him after the first few days. His late dissipated life had so absorbed his time and thoughts, that, in spite of all the advantages offered him by his father, he had taken little pains to fit himself for what he knew would be a stiff examination. Mabel and Mr. Raine had imagined that he was going up to certain success, and looked even for a high place among the firsts for him. The fortnight passed slowly away, and, feeling he had not done himself justice and that failure was almost certain, Harold wrote to say he should not return until he knew the result of the examination, and the lists would not be out for another ten days.

Harold wearily came down to his solitary breakfast on the morning when he knew he should hear his fate. It was past ten, and the letter lay upon the table. He took it up, and his hand trembled a little as he opened the envelope; a minute after, he had crushed it in his hand, and had flung it into the basket, while an angry flush mounted to his forehead. His name stood last of all upon the paper—bottom of the third class. "Fool," he muttered, "better not have passed at all than to pass so," and the lad fairly groaned. His pride was stung, he felt humiliated, mortified; it was almost more than he could bear. There was no thought of a father's and a sister's disappointment, none of a brother's mortification, only of his own degradation. He rose from his untouched meal, and began to pack his things. He dreaded the sight of any of his London friends; his one thought was to get away from them all, where he would see and hear nothing of them and their doings. He would gladly have welcomed Hartley then, but that morning he did not come.

Harold was not to escape so easily. A ring at the door announced an early visitor, and before he had time to escape a young man walked into the room.

"You can't go to-day, my dear fellow; we could not really allow it. Bother that stupid examination; nobody will remember anything about it this time to-morrow. None of us will bother you about it."

Harold listened and hesitated. Sad faces, he knew,

would greet him at home, and here they would pass it by; but he shook his head finally, and his friend, seeing it was no good trying to persuade him further, only insisted upon his joining them at a lunch they were going to have, and left him alone again.

Harold brooded over his humiliation until, by the time he left his lodgings, he had worked himself into a state of desperation, and he felt he did not care what he did if only he could drown the thoughts that came surging through his brain. He was warmly welcomed by some half-dozen young men, and seeing he was downcast and troubled, they sought to cheer him by applauding his sayings more than usual. They succeeded certainly. Harold became wildly merry, and when they sought to check him they found they had gone too far. The burning draught was coursing through his brain, his cheeks were flushed, and his wild words and unnatural laugh told of the deadly effects of the drink. He rose at last, and, sending for a cab, was soon on his way to the station. The porter shook his head as he saw with pity the fevered and excited state in which the young man was, but he helped him into a carriage, and the train was soon bearing him towards his lovely country home.

Mabel had eagerly opened the telegram that had come from her brother that morning, hoping it would tell of certain success, but it only ran,—“Expect me by the 4.45. Send the dog-cart.” She held it

out to Guy, and looked to him to tell her what to think.

"Perhaps he wants to tell us himself, Mab; though I told you not to make up your mind too surely."

"But he could not fail, Guy; he has never disappointed us yet."

"He is not what he was," said Guy, sadly. "I will tell James about driving in to meet him. I would have gone myself, but since father has arranged for me to read with Mr. Brock in the afternoons, I don't get free till so late. Anyway I shall walk towards the station and meet him. He must drive home alone; father said James might as well take his holiday now, and arranged for him to go this afternoon, so he can wait to see Harold start, and then go on by the next train."

Guy was rapidly taking quite an important place in the household. Even Miss Raine was learning to depend on him, and though he could not resist teasing her now and then, they were quite good friends.

"You will take care of my little girl, Aunt Caroline," he said playfully, as he stooped to stroke her head, "and I'll soon bring back the 'conquering hero.'" Mabel looked up brightly from her low seat by the window, and he stooped and kissed her in a manner quite unusual to him.

"That means 'Courage if I bring him back defeated,'" she said, and he nodded as he turned away.

A minute after, and his bright face was in at the window. "Mabel, you look awfully jolly this afternoon. What are you thinking about? I declare I wish I need not go. It's frantically stuffy in old Brock's room; and what do I care for Latin verse?"

"A great deal. Now, off with you, or you will be late."

"You are awfully hard on a fellow; you don't know how I have to work."

"Yes, I saw you this morning. Two hours' scamper on Brownie and an hour and a half's hard cricket. It was too bad; I must see if I can't get you a holiday."

"Well, it's very fine to laugh, but what do you do all day, I should like to know?"

"Ah, what? You will find out some day."

"Perhaps I know already," he said, looking into her soft eyes with his own bright ones. "Well, I'm off. Good-bye again;" and as the white and the brown sun-burnt hands met in the usual way, they laughed at the contrast between the two, and he bounded away.

"Isn't he a bonny fellow, auntie?" Mabel could not help saying, and she assented warmly as they watched him disappear from view.

Meanwhile Harold was quickly being whirled towards them. He tried not to think; his heart was sore and wounded, so he shut out speculations as to what the home party would say; and, feeling he



did not care for any one or anything, he alighted from the train. James had not arrived, and he walked the platform restlessly and impatiently. He looked across to the refreshment room, and finally walked across. He needed something more to brace him for the trying task before him. The fevered brain reeled beneath it, and it was only with tottering footsteps that he climbed the platform stairs. James was there now, waiting to help his young master to his seat. He thought him looking hot and excited, but he knew he was returning from an important examination, so he welcomed him kindly, hoping his apparent agitation was from the pleasure of success. "The young master seems in an uncommon hurry," was his comment, as he watched the dog-cart disappear unusually quick down the road. Usually obedient to the slightest touch, the mare grew restive beneath the hard hand that held and jerked the reins with unyielding grasp. She reared, and showed she would not stand such treatment; but the reins were drawn tighter, and a heavy stroke from the whip bewildered the already frightened creature. She bounded forward, and Harold became aware that he was being dashed along at a pace beyond his control. On, on they went, and as the fresh air drove the fire from his brain he sought in vain to check the headlong career of his favourite. It was useless; and then something sprang forward from the hedge—a moment's pause, then one cry from a voice he knew,

an awful silence, a sudden jolt—then blackness, vague unconscious dread, a terrible struggle back to life and sense, and then the bitter agony of knowing all.

Guy had turned with a willing step from Mr. Brock's. The afternoon was close, and for the active, energetic boy even two hours' confinement was trying. He walked briskly towards the station, running now and then, and whistling away the doubtful thoughts of Harold that would come. Suddenly, from a little eminence, his eye caught sight of the advancing vehicle, and he took in the situation at once. "Cherry has proved too much for him," was his rapid conclusion. "Come what may, I must meet him at the cross-roads. She won't heed the turning, and will just dash on over the broken road to the old flint quarries." He darted forward; there was no time to lose, every nerve was strained; one prayer for help, one thought of his mother and Mabel, and he sprung through the hedge just in time to seize the reins as the wild creature was speeding his brother to certain death. With all his might he succeeded in dragging round her head, but she grew savage with this to her cruel treatment, and shook the reins from his grasp. There was no fear of the quarries now, however, and with a sudden terrible pain in his arm, he uttered that one scream and fell to the ground, and knew nothing more, only that Harold was safe.

The first news at the house of any accident having taken place was from Kit. Joe was walking along

the highroad some ten minutes after Cherry had run the cart into the high bank, and overturning both herself and Harold, lay helpless till assistance should arrive. He ran forward in alarm, and raising the young master, tried to restore him to consciousness. He soon perceived that he had sustained no serious injury, and placing him in the cart, he raised Cherry, and mounting her, rode quickly back into the village to procure assistance. He sent Kit to Miss Raine with the sad tidings, and hastened back again with willing helpers to carry the young master home. No thought of Guy entered any one's mind at Edgley House. "An accident to Harold" was the one thought filling every mind and blanching every cheek. Hasty preparations to receive him were soon made; a man was despatched on horseback for the doctor, and Mabel and her aunt stood watching down the drive for the sad procession to appear.

Harold partly recovered consciousness as they raised him, and looking wildly around, he muttered, "Guy—look for Guy!" and then lay back again. Joe directed the men to pass on with their burden, while he and those who still remained turned back with a sickening fear at their hearts that something worse was still to be revealed. There was a simultaneous pause when, after a walk of a quarter of a mile or so, they neared the cross-roads and came suddenly upon the outstretched figure. Joe knelt down, and, bending tenderly over him, called his name again and

again. But there was no response or sign of hearing, the white face had a fixed, agonized look, and yet there was rest in its expression as well. He was not dead. Thank God, no; they soon ascertained that. When they gently moved him, a low moan of such agony caused them to cease the attempt. The road was stained with blood, and it was evident his injuries were severe, but they so shrunk from hurting him they did not attempt to touch him a second time. Joe's two companions volunteered to go for a stretcher, and he was left alone to watch. A terrible fear that even while he watched the loved young life should slip away distressed the faithful man, and it was with painful anxiety that he looked for the least return of colour to the deadly pale cheeks, or motion to the prostrate form.

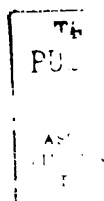
Guy was much beloved in Edgley; he had already won the warm affection of all the men upon the estate; while the boys, whose cricket and village athletics he superintended, simply worshipped Master Guy, and there was not one amongst them who would not rather gladly have sustained an injury themselves than see him in the condition in which he now lay. Joe's heart rose up in prayer that this young life might be spared; and even as he prayed the sharp ringing sound of horse's hoofs along the road told of some help near. It was no other than the doctor hastening to attend to the summons to the house. A loud "Hilloa" from Joe warned him to slacken his

speed, and as he drew near enough for words to pass, he was quickly put in possession of the facts. Instantly dismounting, he knelt by the boy, and gently altered the position in which he had fallen. Again the low moan broke from Guy's lips, and they saw that it was from his right arm, which was now made visible, that the blood was slowly flowing. Drawing out his case of surgical instruments, the doctor ripped up the sleeve of Guy's coat, and both men almost shrunk away at the sight that met their eyes. The sudden wrench, as Cherry started off again after Guy had turned her head, had completely snapped the bone of his arm just above the elbow, a cruel kick from her hind leg had further injured it above the wrist, and the wheel passing over his arm seemed almost to have severed one part from the other. That right arm, in the strength of which he had only that morning so gloried, lay beside him now helpless and crushed.

"Poor fellow!" whispered the doctor; "I never in all my life saw such utter destruction of one limb. No human power can ever restore it; the bone seems crushed and splintered in some four or five places, while the flesh is terribly torn. There is only one course, but I must have another opinion.—Can you ride?" turning to Joe; and as he replied in the affirmative, he scribbled a hurried note, and wrote out a telegram, with both of which he sent him to the town, promising to wait and watch himself till the expected stretcher should arrive.



AFTER THE ACCIDENT.



He carefully examined the lad further, but besides severe bruises, he had apparently sustained no further injuries. He then bandaged his arm as best he could, and, rising, sadly stood with folded arms gazing down upon the prostrate figure. He had known Guy in his childhood, and had met him again lately in all the health and enjoyment of boyhood. It seemed so sudden, so uncalled-for a trial, that one so active, so joyous in life should be laid low like this; and he almost wished another hand and not his might perform the operation which he saw was unavoidable. The time passed slowly, and he wrapped the boy in his own coat to protect him from the chill evening air. The sound of horse's feet approaching were welcome, but it was with a grave face that the newcomer dismounted and examined Guy's injuries. The men arrived at the same moment with the stretcher, and they gently lifted him up and walked slowly towards the house. The doctors followed, deep in conversation, and the result at which they arrived was, that if the London doctor for whom they had telegraphed concurred with them, no time must be lost in amputating the shattered limb. The extent of the injuries he had sustained, and the shock his whole system had experienced forbade any hope of restoration without this; and even should they spare his arm, it would hang useless by his side, and be a constant trial to his constitution.

Mabel was on the door-step when the sad cavalcade



arrived. No one had been sent to warn her of what had happened ; but Harold's repeated questioning for his brother had roused her fears, and she felt something needing all her presence of mind and nerve was coming. She was looking out into the gathering darkness, when she heard the sound of steps upon the carriage-drive. They came slowly and silently along ; no word was spoken, the sorrow in each heart closed every mouth. Mabel was still wearing the soft white dress in which Guy had admired her that afternoon ; and as the men caught sight of her they involuntarily paused, and as she marked their action a cold fear took possession of her. The doctor advanced quickly, and persuaded her to go inside, whilst they carried her brother to his room. She obeyed, but she read from their faces that the news they had to break was bad news. She nerved herself to bear it, and feeling she might be trusted, they at once told her all, even what they feared would prove the only remedy. She felt that they must know what was best, and only asked that she might see him first. She was quite composed and quiet as she entered the darkened room, and stood for a minute looking at the still white face ; then, bending over him, she pressed one passionate kiss upon his forehead and turned away. She felt she *must* keep up, and though an intense aching and a bitter sorrow were thrilling through and through her, her voice did not shake as she spoke, nor her hand tremble as she gently undid his collar

and neck-tie. Both the doctors were amazed, and needing some woman's help till Janet should arrive, they did not deny her request that she might stay while they dressed his arm. She shuddered, it is true, as she saw the mangled state in which it was, and she realized what pain her brother must have suffered to be thus wounded. But she gently kissed the sunburnt hand, and herself held the bandage with which they bound his shoulder. Then they sent her away, and with one last caress she went; only, as she opened the door she paused:—

“Won't he know till it is all over?”

“No, not if we can help it; it must be, so it is better he should not have the pain of knowing first.”

Then she closed the door; but it seemed so terrible. Three hours ago he had been full of life and energy; the next time he came to himself he would be crippled, maimed for life.

Her aunt had been busy with Harold, and had not even known that Guy was hurt, so it was a sudden shock to her when Mabel met her with the news that amputation was inevitable. She grew excited, and declared it must not be: her brother would never allow it; and dear Guy, what would he say? Mabel could not think yet of Guy's part in it; she must just keep to going straight forward, content that what would be the best for him in the end should be done.

“It must be, Aunt Caroline. Dr. Beeling told me

himself that it was endless suffering all his life, or this. I will take it all on myself; it may break his heart when first he knows it, but God will help him; and he will live a noble, unselfish life, that shall make the loss worth while. Father shall blame me if he blame any one." Her voice was hard and constrained; and her aunt left her, half wondering she could feel so coolly about anything happening to one so dear to her as she knew Guy to be, and went herself to see the doctors. But she was met by them with the same firmness that Mabel had shown.

Harold meanwhile had been seen by the physician, who thought that a day or two's rest would set him all to rights again. He saw, of course, in what state the lad must have been at the time, and he spoke a few words of warning; but Harold turned from him, he could not bear it, and so the kind man left him. He was suffering more than Guy just then; and as he lay still in the darkness, wild regrets rose up in his heart. He knew Guy was injured, though never guessing how severely; but an accident of any sort was enough to rouse self-accusation when it proceeded from such a cause. Why had he not listened to Mabel in the winter? Why had Guy's faithful watchings and warnings been unheeded? Why had Mr. Averne's earnest words been neglected? Why had those words, "If not for hers, for Christ's sake," rung ceaselessly in his ears without effect? Such were some of the bitter questions with which he up-

braided himself. He turned from every attempt to soothe him; and his kind attendants found it hard to manage him, he was so sullen and intractable. Hushed voices around him, and gentle footsteps moving to and fro, only ruffled him the more, and he flung himself restlessly from side to side. But by-and-by a little cool hand was laid upon his forehead, and a little voice said, "Harold dear, dear Harold, I may come here, may I not? Nurse has gone, and so has Susan; and Mabel looks so pale; and no one speaks to me. You won't mind me, Hal?" There was a plaintive tone in the child's voice, and the sudden feeling that there was some one in the world still wanting him overcame Harold. He put his arms round his little sister, and drawing her towards him, kissed her again and again; and then, unable to control himself, he burst into tears. "Lil, little Lil," he whispered, "keep your hand on my forehead, so." The child was frightened; but she clung to her brother, and the tiny fingers, gently stroking his cheeks and hair, soothed him.

"Hal, you shouldn't cry," said the child innocently. "Does it hurt very much? And yet you are not hurt as much as Guy. Cherry kicked him so, his arm is all crushed to pieces, and they are going to cut it off. Poor Guy! he will never be able to play cricket again, nor row, nor anything."

"Lilian, what do you mean?" said Harold, startled into sternness. "Guy! what about Guy? they only

told me he was hurt. It can't be true; you have made a mistake, child."

"I have not. There are two doctors here, and a tall man from London has just come, and now they are all in Guy's room; and auntie is crying in the dining-room. I heard nurse tell Susan that they are going to cut Guy's arm off!"

A cry of pain escaped those white lips, and, to Lilian's horror, her brother fell back fainting. He was already shaken and exhausted, and this sudden news proved too much. Mabel heard his voice, and was soon at hand with restoratives, and she was not long before she brought him round; but the blue hollows round his eyes and the ghastly paleness of his cheeks told of a struggle going on within.

"Tell me it is not true, Mabel," he said as he saw her.

"Harold dear, I can't," she replied gently.

"Then go, and take Lil. I will call if I want anything; you must leave me to bear this alone."

She saw that he meant to be obeyed, so she led the child away to the nursery, and gave directions that both the little girls were to be put to bed. Harold was left alone, indeed; for he never thought of carrying his trouble to One who was ready to lighten it.

Meanwhile, as Lilian had said, the surgeon from London had arrived, and the consultation having taken place, they were all of the same opinion as to

the only course to be pursued with any hope; and that must be done immediately.

Mabel's self-possession forsook her for the first time when they told her they must perform the operation so speedily. "Now—at once!" she said bewildered; "and he can't possibly know till it is all over! Then let me see him once again." Receiving permission, she again entered the darkened room. Guy had roused for a moment, and a low moan broke on her ears as she opened the door. "Guy, dear Guy," she said, as half consciously he looked up; but she could say no more, and only smoothed away the dark curls from his forehead. He seemed to know who it was, for a little of the pained look passed from his face. She did not dare stay long, and again she made her way to the surgeons with a request. "He will want me to help him to bear it when he comes to, so please let me know as soon as I may go back to him again;" and they promised her they would. She felt she was wanted no more just then, and she turned into her own room, and throwing the window wide open, looked down on the beauty and stillness, and tried to think calmly.

"O mother!" was the one thought of her heart, "for the second time I am glad that you have gone from us. I do not think you could have borne it; I hardly think I can. Guy, our Guy—yours and mine, mother—the most active, most restless of us all; and now he is to lose what has made life beautiful and

joyous to him, and to go out into the long, long years before him crippled. Oh, can it be right? can it be God's way of training our boy?" And then she prayed, till at last a certainty that almost startled her came to her, that this was God's "right way" by which he was leading her brother out into a fuller fitness for his service. So she took up this fresh trouble, resting all the weight of it upon the One from whose hand it came, and nerved herself to help Guy to bear this heavy trial. After all it was easier to think of the sufferer than of the one by whose hand the suffering was caused; but Mabel was as yet ignorant of the circumstances of that afternoon. She went again into Harold's room as the night advanced, and found him awake and feverish.

"Mabel, I am a brute and a coward; you don't know what it is to feel that I have crippled him, for it was to save me that he has been wounded;" and with many self-accusations Harold told his tale. And Mabel listened, proud of her boy's bravery, though sorry and ashamed for the cause. She could not speak as he ceased, and he said, almost crossly,—

"Mabel, you are angry with me, I do believe, as though I had done it on purpose."

"No, indeed, indeed, Harold dear; only I was thinking how strange it was that he should meet with this trouble by the very foe against which we have both been trying to fight. But I think even now Guy would almost be glad to bear this if you

would learn to hate it as we do, and would give up the past ways and fight against the old temptations; if only through this you learned to know Christ's love, Harold."

"Mabel," said Harold earnestly, "do you and Guy really care as much as that? Perhaps I shall be able to show you that I can give it all up. I don't want to go on as I have been doing. You little know the life I have lived in London. Guy does, and if he forgives me, then perhaps, Mabel—but who knows? I think you may trust me."

"I do, dear; but I do not want you to trust yourself, or something else will be sent to show you the only safe way."

Janet, who was already installed as nurse, appeared with a little tray at this juncture, and Mabel, feeling she could not bear to be spoken to even by her, wandered downstairs. All was so silent, so still, it was almost unbearable; only an occasional step on the stairs and the quiet closing of the door broke the silence. At last the doctors came down, and Mabel, hastening to ring for some refreshment, went to meet them.

"It is well over, Miss Raine."

"He knows?"

"No, not yet; we will let you know as soon as he can be spoken to;" and again Mabel was left alone, dreading the hard task that was before her.

The morning was beginning to break, and she opened the hall door, and throwing a shawl around



her stole out into the cool early air. It seemed years since last she stood there and watched them carrying home her injured brother; but she did not feel agitated, hardly troubled, only very, very sad; and in her need, there was an empty longing for some human hand to help her to be brave.

Quick steps on the broad drive aroused her from her thoughts, and she instinctively knew who was coming. She did not start as he drew near, only stretched out her hands, and said, "Hartley, you will help me." He drew her to him; and feeling there was less need now to strain herself to keep up any longer, she let herself lie like a child in his arms while he soothed and comforted her.

There was no need for explanations or words on either side; they dropped all expression of their own feelings, knowing how long and truly they had loved each other, and united in common sorrow over the present trial. Mabel let him lead her in, and he told her how a telegram from her father, despatched directly he had received the sad news from home, had requested him to go to Edgley at once, and there stay till he should arrive. "He knew of this too, dear," concluded Hartley, "and he evidently meant I was to comfort and help you; so I may stay, may I not?" And the dark, truthful eyes looked back the answer he craved.

All the details which Mabel had been able to gather were related, and as he heard of the sad, sad

cause, he felt how doubly nay trebly deep the sorrow was. "Our poor, poor Guy," he said, "sacrificed to the cause in which he had struggled so bravely. O Mabel, what will not the drink do! How will he bear it?"

A knock at the door interrupted them, and Mabel knew the summons to her brother's room had come. "He is conscious and quiet now," was the message, "and you must let him know all gently."

"We will go," she said, and Hartley, responding to the little word, went with her.

Very pale and unlike himself did Guy look as they entered the room, which was almost dark. He looked up and smiled as Mabel bent over him.

"You are better, darling," she said.

"Perhaps; but what has happened, Mab? It all seems so dark, so confused. I only knew I saved him. He is not hurt, is he?"

"No, dear, very little; he will be well in a day or two. But you—"

"Yes, I know I am hurt; but not much, I think. My head feels all clear, only my arm is so heavy and aches. Have I hurt it much? I don't seem able to lift it. I couldn't shake hands, Mab."

A quiver of pain ran through Mabel's frame. Never again would those two hands meet in the old way; only one of the many blanks, and that a little one, but still it was hard to bear. She was standing silent, but Guy was looking at her; and as he saw

the tears gather in her eyes, and then driven back, and watched the faint flush that rose and then died upon her cheeks, he read more than she could have guessed.

"Mabel," he whispered, "you have something to tell me, something hard to bear; so do it, dear. I have only just woke up, and I can't move. It seems like a long, long dream. The last thing I heard was my own voice as I fell, but that seems far away now. I am so weak I must be hurt somewhere; so tell me, dear."

And she told him, very gently, and he knew the agony that he must bear, she had already borne, that his sorrow was her sorrow; so he tried to take it calmly. In after-years, when he recalled the feeling it had aroused, the feeling that death, anything was better than life so, he wondered how he could have kept so silent and still.

Mabel's voice was choked with sobs, and she bent over her brother, tenderly smoothing his hair, and he kept his eyes fixed upon her as she spoke.

"There is nothing worse still?" he said, as she paused; and as Mabel shook her head, he thanked her in his gentle, affectionate way, and then asked her to go, and Hartley led her away.

Guy felt he must be by himself. He hardly dare think; he did better,—he took his trouble straight to his Father in heaven, and laying it at his feet, left it there. "I can't understand it, I can't pray about it

even; but I know who has sent it. Some day he will teach me why. I must only leave it with him, and ask him to show it me bit by bit, not all at once." Such were the thoughts that filled his heart, and the doctors felt thankful that he did not fret himself more.

"All that long time," Guy said to his sister one day when he was getting better, "I was too weak even to think or pray; but one verse rung in my ears, Christ's words to Peter, 'I have prayed for thee,' and it seemed as though I need not trouble about it any more. He was praying for me all the time I was rushing after the horse. He helped me to get her head round. Even when I fell and everything seemed slipping away from me, all the way through he was praying for me, Mabel, and still he does."

But it was not without long battling that Guy could speak like this. After the shock of first learning, there came long days of intense weakness and suffering, when life seemed hateful. Whether he slept or waked his terrible loss was ever present with him, and at times the thought of bearing it was intolerable. He tried to grasp what it would mean to be crippled for life. As health and strength came back, the realization of his condition grew more and more painful; but he bore it in silence, and those who watched him wondered he could be so brave.

"Hartley," he said one day when Mr. Averno was sitting by his bedside, "let me say all the things over to you that I can't do. I say them over and over to myself till I am sick and tired, because till I have got up and know and feel they may not be, I *can't* believe it. To begin with, I never can slide downstairs; that's the first thing in the morning. Then I can't cut up my own breakfast; Mabel must do that first, before the others are down, and not let any one see. Will they stare, Hartley, do you think? I am such a coward, I think I must go and live alone somewhere, because people *will* look."

"Yes, Guy, they will; but you can live that down. They will learn to love you in spite of that. It is not my leg or my arm you care for; it is me, I hope."

"I'm not so sure of that, sir. If you were to come hopping into the room on one leg, I don't think you would be quite so high in my estimation. No; that is one of the things. I shall be stared at and stared at until I learn to hate my empty sleeve. Well, it is a good thing I signed the pledge while I could write, isn't it? But to proceed. I can't row, nor play cricket, nor ride, nor write, nor climb trees, nor shake hands, nor drive, nor fight, nor be a doctor—oh dear! oh dear! what a lot of ill people there will be in the world for want of me! There, now, what do you say to all that?"

"Guy, my dearest fellow, I can only say my heart

is all sore and aching for you, but it is proud and glad for you too. You are looking things straight in the face, and seeing God's hand in it all. You are not shirking it, and it has been bitter for you; we none of us know how bitter, we none of us can guess how you have felt during this time of suffering, and you have not let us know. Mabel and I have learned lessons from you, Guy, and so has poor Harold. And if life may be sad for you from your loss, it will be gladdened for you by greater gain. God has given you an influence he has not given to many, and he will trust you to use it well. He has made you brave, and he needs his courageous soldiers in the fore-front. He will give it you to speak and to save for him; and in heaven, if never before, you will look back and thank God for what is at present so hard."

"Hartley, I declare you make a fellow feel ready to go through life with neither legs nor arms, if it could make it such a grand thing as that. Well though, I have grumbled enough; and do you know, after all I don't believe I am unhappy a bit. I feel quite sorry for you when I see how sad you all are for me. Why, even the children drop their smiles and sunshine when they come to see me. Evie and Lil come tripping in as if they were a hundred, whilst Madame—O Hartley! though I was so ill, I could not help laughing to myself when first I saw her. She scowled at anybody who dared to laugh in my room, and if anybody said anything about riding

or driving, she was almost ready to chase them from the room. Poor old Madame! I shan't have the heart to tease her any more, she has worried me out of my life with her kindness; but I am grateful. It makes one appreciate some one else, though, and after all there is no one else in the world like Mabel;—is there, Hartley?"

"No one," replied the young man, looking down into the laughing eyes.

"Oh! you dear things," said Guy, with sudden enthusiasm, "I am so glad for you, you don't know. I used to lie awake and think how awfully jolly you both were. You thought I did not know anything about it, but I guessed long ago in London, and I used to wonder how I was to make you understand each other; and then after all you have to thank me for it, though it was done unintentionally. But you don't know what you've got, Hartley, she *is* so splendid. You are nearly as good though, and together you will be almost perfect. Perhaps sometimes you will welcome your one-armed brother, and trust him with a little work in your parish."

"I think if I have cause to be jealous of any one, it is of you, Guy. You and Mabel are so all in all to each other, I sometimes wonder how you found room for me both of you."

So they talked on, and both learned lessons in that room they carried with them through life.

Mr. Raine's sorrow at his boy's accident perhaps

exceeded in outward exhibition that of any other member of his family. He had been so proud of Guy, and to see him thus maimed was almost more than he could bear. The sad cause of the accident had crept out, too, and Mr. Raine's few sad, severe words to his eldest son cut Harold to the heart. "You have lost my confidence and my trust, my boy. My forgiveness I freely give, and my love cannot change, but you must win back your old place in my esteem. I will help you all I can, but the effort must come from yourself; and it is God's help you must seek to strengthen you, and may he give it you."

Harold turned away with his old hopelessness depressing him again. "Mother!" the word rose to his lips, and he wondered what she would have said to him. "She would have put her dear arms round my neck, and cried as though her heart would break; and that would have made me feel sorry the right way. I think I want her most now."

But it was a higher strength he needed. Thoughts of his mother might soften and soothe him, but they could not change him, and it was still alone that he bore his burden.

Hartley tried what he could to help him, but he, too, failed.

"I know I am a fool," he said, "I know it is my fault; it is no good preaching. I have ruined Guy's life. Yes, it is I—I—I. It is good of you, Hartley, but you can't help me." So he wandered about



moody and restless, and would let no one approach him. They tried to persuade him to go and see his brother, but he shrank from it, and in spite of many messages he would not go near him.

The first day that Guy was able to move on to the sofa there was general rejoicing. He was carried into Mabel's room and drawn near to the window, where he could look out upon the lovely summer scene. His face was all smiles as he welcomed one after another as they came to see him, and not one was saddened by a visit to that room, only Mabel brought a momentary look of pain to his face, but he laughed it away. She was so pleased to see him again in her little boudoir, she forgot for a minute, and as she advanced she held out her hand in the old familiar way. He just looked up in her face with the least shade of reproach in his eyes, and then he held out his other hand and said, half laughing, "It must be the left hand now, Mab."

Then when they had all gone he leant back with a sad worn look on his young face. It was worse than he had imagined, and the feeling that he could not, could not live so, almost overcame him. "It will always be so," he thought, bitterly: "they will pity me, and I must bear it; they will drop their voices when they speak of things I cannot do, and it sends me nearly wild. Even when I was a tiny boy, and hurt myself, I could not bear they should pity me; and mother understood me, *she* never did. It will

be one of the hardest things—oh! it is lonely work. I would almost rather have died like brave little Sparrow.”

He was still lying back, his face turned towards the deep blue sky, with something like tears in his wistful eyes, when a voice close by aroused him.

“Guy!”

“Harold, dear fellow, you have come at last.” All trace of the late sad thoughts vanished, and it was with his own bright frank expression that he turned towards his brother.

But Harold had been silently watching him, and had read some of the sadness of Guy’s thoughts. “Guy, you must not speak so; you can’t forgive me, so don’t pretend to. I know every time you look at your arm you will think, ‘Harold did it.’ It is right though, Guy, and I can bear it. I did. Yes, they have all taken care to tell me that. I have ruined life for you—I, your brother; so hate me, Guy, if you will, but don’t be kind, don’t be false.”

“Harold,” there was real pain in Guy’s voice, “is that how I have taught you to think of me? Shake hands, old fellow, and don’t talk so; let me tell you about it.” He put out his left hand, and Harold took it; then his face quivered with sudden emotion, and dropping on his knees by the sofa-side, he fairly broke down. Guy waited till he was quiet; he still had tight hold of his hand, and at last suffered himself to be drawn into a chair; and then he spoke.

"You know, Harold, when I saw you coming helter-skelter along the road, I can't tell you how I felt. I saw at once where Cherry would take you, and I was afraid I could not be in time. I tried, though, and I don't think I ever ran so fast in all my life. Poor Cherry! she must have thought me cruel. It was a hard tug; and then when her head was righted, somehow I could not let go till something snapped in my arm, and I fell. I seemed just to think of you all in that second, every one of you, and our mother too; and then it all went, and there came darkness and unconsciousness. How long that lasted I don't know; now and then I sort of half came back and then went off again. Then after a long, long while I opened my eyes and saw where I was; and then Mabel came bending over me, and I saw from her face something had happened. It was hard at first, of course; but you were safe, Harold, and that was worth anything. And, Hal, I want you to let this make you safe another way,—I want you every time you look at my empty sleeve to feel a great, great hatred for the drink. It was *that* that did it; and it does more harm, more wrong, than anything else in the world. I have been about in London so much this year I have seen something of all the evil it can do, of the fearful end it leads to at last; and I would give more than my right arm to know you were safe from it. It may be hard when you go back amongst old friends; but you are not

the sort of fellow to be afraid of anything difficult. Do try, old boy. You know I have given it up altogether; and though one meets with a little chaff now and then, that is nothing much. I think if we are not ready to give up what keeps us from being good, why, God won't give us his help. You know, Harold, I sometimes wish we both thought the same about such things. I don't know how I should have got through all this without knowing it did not come by chance; and I would like you to feel it too, it makes life so different. I can kneel down every morning now and thank God for this accident; so don't trouble over it, only for your own sake I don't want you to forget, because I think it will help you to keep clear of things that hurt you."

"Guy, I do think you are the very noblest fellow that ever lived; and, by God's help, I will try, only you must look after me. You know better than any one how bad I have been. You know how it was I failed so miserably in the examination. If you can forgive, and will help me, I can believe God will too."

Then they were silent, and the two brothers felt they needed each other then. Guy had been rather brooding over losing Mabel. Necessarily Hartley even now claimed much of her time; and though their loving self-sacrifice was most constant and untiring on his behalf, yet he dreaded the time when she should go from him, and craved something to

absorb his interest and thoughts, so God sent him Harold. It had long been his constant care to watch over and shield him in every way he could; but he had worked against the will of the one for whom he was striving. Now, that one came to him ready to be helped; and though the work might be none the less difficult, it was more pleasant. But Harold was still weak. Guy felt that more than ever as his brother left him, and he watched him strolling up and down the smooth lawn with little Lilian by his side. He looked so graceful and so handsome, his brother felt an intense sorrowful pity that it should be his own hand that was sapping the joy of his life and lessening the prospects before him. And this pity strengthened his love; and Guy set before him, as the one thing he wanted to do, Harold's restoration. "By praying and working," he said to himself; "but I can see it will not be quick work;" and it was not. Long years of patience and forbearance were needed. Harold fell and fell again, and was often ready to give up in despair; but the brother's strong love and the brother's firm hope were something to take hold of in hours of weakness and self-distrust, and he always knew where he might turn for advice and assistance. Thus Guy's work was rewarded. The deadly temptation was at last overcome, and Harold learned to stand alone,—or rather learned not to do so; for it was only when he found what strength and what grace are granted by One

who never faileth that Guy could cease his surveillance, and feel satisfied his brother was doing well. Though never a very strong character, Harold grew to be a great favourite with all the home circle; and when he had a home of his own, there was no more welcome visitor than his brother Guy. He never forgot that his hand had maimed him, and never forgot it was his brother's hand that had saved him both from death and from drink; and through youth and manhood on into old age, the strong affection between the brothers remained unshaken and unabated.

Guy completely recovered, and with a brave heart settled down to live life as it now was set before him. It is true he shrank intensely from first meeting with those he knew; but he learned to live that feeling down, and was soon about amongst them his old cheery self. The labourers on the estate would turn round to look after him as he passed, and rough words of affection would pass from one to another as they watched the tall manly form disappear, and they sighed to think of the heavy cross he had to bear.


Hartley had long since gone back again to his work; but constant letters passed between Edgley and the little lodgings where he still had rooms, so they knew of his work and progress. He had begged for Mabel earlier than Mr. Raine had thought to part with her, and he had won the day; so two

hearts were looking forward to a day ten months further on when, on a bright June morning, they hoped to be united.

Thus the summer passed away to the party at Edgley; and it was one they none of them ever forgot, and one in which they all learned life-lessons and gained life-experience.

## CHAPTER XXI.

"SWEETER FAR THAN JOY IS DUTY."

"R. AVERNE! Oh, we have missed you! I am glad to see you again."

A greeting so friendly and cordial was cheering to the young clergyman as he turned away alone from the crowded London station upon his return from Edgley.

"Lionel, my lad, this is kind of you," Hartley said, as the boy took the bag from his hand and walked by his side. "How has all been going on?"

"Up and down, sir; chiefly down, lately. We have wanted you among us again."

And then followed question and answer on either side. Hartley told of Harold and Guy, and Lionel's ready sympathy was all alive for Mabel and her brothers, and he listened with pleasure to the account of his young hero's bravery, only deeply deploring the sad result.

"He won't be any the worse for it though, sir, I feel sure," Lionel concluded. "He is a rare one to work, and I don't think we shall find him holding



back because he can't do exactly as others do. I used to think he and Sparrow were the two bravest, noblest fellows I knew; and now one has gone for ever, and the other is crippled for life. Isn't it strange?"

"Strange indeed, Lionel. I often wonder, when we are losing every day, how we can go on as we do; only it is through that that we learn to love Him more who supplies all the blank places."

Then questions of Lionel's late doings were asked, and he had plenty of stories about one and another of the cubs—how this one had taken to watching over his father, and was winning him away from the drink; how another had brought six new members to the Band of Hope: plenty of encouragement, but plenty of disappointment too; some he had hoped for had not responded to his efforts, some who had begun had fallen back—"up and down," as he truly said.

"And you—how are you getting on, and how do you like your work?" asked Hartley.

"I know it is right to be there, sir, so I do not think whether I like it or not, and there are many things to make me glad. We have gained three cubs from the last piece of work, and there are two men who are trying hard. I have been longing for you to come; they want more help than I can give them."

So Lionel related; and Hartley listened, and

thanked God He had so early chosen one who so loved the work. Lionel told how lonely it had been at first when the Parkers went. He had so missed Janet's motherly kindness. She was his first friend, and he always remembered that it was through her that he had got to know his other friends. Then, too, his father missed Joe sadly; and they both often longed for little Will, and wished they could have him back with them again—which wish was one day granted. Three years after this Janet laid down the burden of care and sorrow, and went to hear the joyful words for which she had toiled so patiently: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Lionel, with his father's consent, immediately wrote down to offer the lame child a home; and Will, who had always rather pined for his hero, came gladly to live with him for always. The parting was a trial to Kit, but he had now regular employment upon the farm, and so was less able to devote himself entirely to his brother; and thus they did not feel the separation so keenly, and Lionel took care that through frequent meetings the tie between them should never be broken.

They had a splendid Band of Hope meeting the first Tuesday after Mr. Averne's return. He took it entirely himself, and the children looked so pleased

to see him amongst them again. He told them he wanted to speak to them of two of the bravest of their number who had been wounded in the fight—one had already gone to receive his reward, the other was maimed for life. He asked them to remember the first evening when they all met together, and he opened the scarlet book and looked down at the two names standing together. Then he told them of Charlie's life and death; he told them how brave, how bold he had been, and how, in spite of a longing to go away to sea which he never could quench, he had lived and worked amongst them unrepiningly. "I want you to see what boys *can* do," he said. "Charlie had God's cause at his very heart. It was all love with him, love for One he had learned to trust as a Friend, and he wanted to battle against this Friend's enemies. He knew the drink was one of the deadliest of them all, so he went boldly to work against it. I know there are boys and girls here who will tell me it was Charlie's hand that led them to this room. There are men and women who come on Fridays who would say the same; and, dear children, I want you to love the cause of temperance as he loved it, because it is God's cause; I want you to fight against the drink as he fought, because it works the devil's will. I speak to you plainly, for I want you to act plainly. I should like to be able to watch all your lives with the same feelings as I watched

Charlie's, and when you die I should like you to have the same peace and rest that he had, because you know 'your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.'" Then he told them of Guy, also one of their number, wounded in the fight, but fighting still, bravely and self-forgetfully.

Lionel's eyes were glistening as he listened, and when Mr. Averno shook him by the hand afterwards, he could not trust himself to speak. "Charlie's voice will long be heard among us," said Hartley, and Lionel nodded; but as he turned away the empty longing in his heart seemed stronger than ever, and his one cry was for the presence of his "little lad."

In after-years, when Lionel was secretary of the society, and was called to speak from that platform, he always told of Sparrow's life and work, and it never failed to do good he found. The simple tale of the lone boy's life touched his hearers, and as they heard of the motive power of his brave words and deeds, they learned to long for the peace and the courage the boy possessed. All through life Lionel clung to the memory of the friend of his boyhood, and even as he advanced in years, as he formed his plans and mapped out his work, there was always some reference to what his "little lad" would have said and thought.

When Mr. Averno received the appointment to the living of the church where he had so long been curate, there was no one among his congregation

to whom he could look as a more unfailing helper than Lionel Franklin. He kept to the trade he had chosen, and to the end of his days remained a bricklayer. The little house, so dear to him from association, in time became his home, and there he and Will spent many, many happy years. Remembering the kindness once shown to him there, he made it a little centre for helping the friendless boys who throng our streets. He would let them lodgings from time to time, and in many ways would seek to do to them as once had been done to him. He was much beloved by his young adherents, and tales of his life when he was a boy and of the "cubs" were unfailing as warnings and encouragements. Wherever he went Lionel became a friend; his hearty and yet gentle manner, his downright way of stating his opinions, won the confidence and affection of his companions. All his difficulties were carried to Mr. Averte, and his advice and the gentle sympathy of his sweet young wife helped Lionel over many a perplexity and guided him over many a rough place.

Guy, as he grew from the boy into the man, made his headquarters in London. Perhaps one of the greatest disappointments to him resulting from his accident was the impossibility of entering upon the profession which he had chosen from his earliest years. "Guy be a doctor and make baby well," was always his cry when but a child in the nursery. He had looked forward to it with a keen pleasure, and as,

after his accident, he realized that all hopes of it must be put aside, life seemed for a time to have lost its aim. But with the loss of the old ambition there came the dawns of a new. With his father's consent, he went through the training necessary for taking a degree, and though he might only hear and watch, leaving to others the doing, he felt he was qualifying himself for the life he hoped to lead.

He was always dropping in unexpectedly upon Hartley and Mabel in their cozy little home, and was always heartily welcomed. "I don't take up so much room as other people," he would say laughingly; "you can put me up anywhere." But there was always a little corner called Guy's room, and they never knew in the morning but what he might be in it by night. "I have come for some hard work, Hartley," was his general excuse; and Hartley knew what that meant, and gave him all the most difficult and most engrossing things he could find.

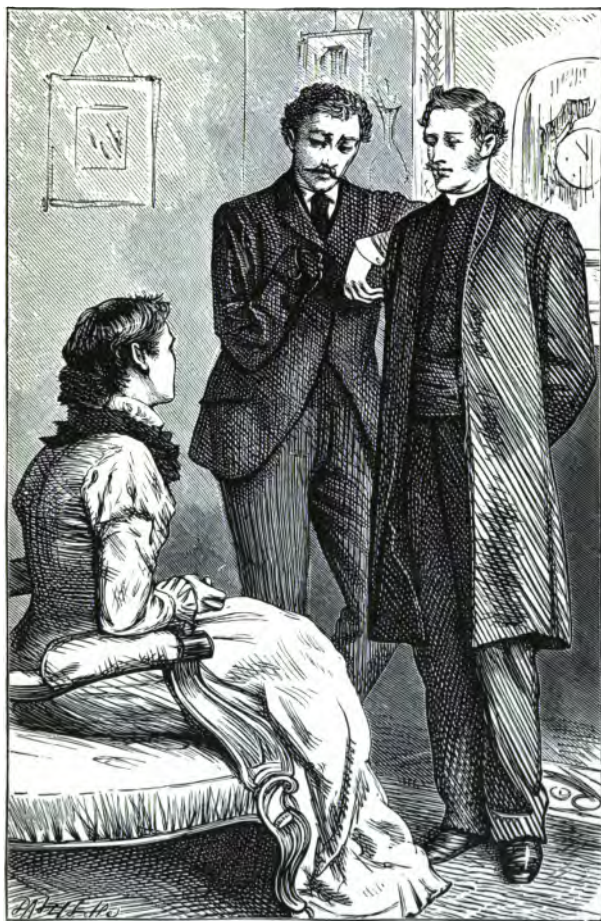
On one of these visits Guy told them he really wanted to have a serious conversation, and they were both to find a whole spare hour, and let him come to them for a talk. Of course they were willing, and round the drawing-room fire they met that evening to hear what he had to say.

"I wish I were not too big, Mab, and then I would go down on the rug as in the old days, and you would talk to me as though I were your boy still; but though I can't do that, and this six feet will not con-

tract into four feet nine inches, talk to me as you would have done then. I want to know if you really think it is my duty to have some settled occupation. Father is very good, and he says, of course, there is no need for me to work for my living. Harold is safe in Jessie's hands now, and has a picture of a home, with babies by the dozen. Evie will soon be making off, if I mistake not; but at present she and Lil are both safe with the dear old father under Madame's care. You two are quite a staid old couple, with two little people to keep you from loving each other too much; and I am free. Now do you think, both of you, that I should be doing right if I were to settle down to some employment where one arm would do all the work? It might be difficult to find, but there must be some such. Now tell me?"

Mabel and Hartley were silent. The little picture he had drawn of their family life, and the contrast between that and his, had struck them both. He had not intended it; but his words seemed to say, "You are safe, and so are the others. You have homes and duties, I none. I want to steer into some port now, and have something settled and fixed. Is it to be this?" and when they spoke they answered, "No."

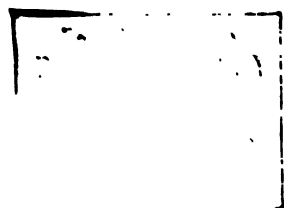
"Thank God for that," Guy said in a low tone. "I told myself I should take your decision as final, and you leave me free." He rose and paced the room restlessly; then pausing, he leant against the mantelpiece, and spoke to them both.



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You know me, Mab, and so do you, Hartley; I'd do it if I felt it right, but I do not. I know a good man gets into selfish ways generally, but you must keep me from that. I have learned to love London. Years ago, when first I came, it was you, Isabel, who first led me into these streets, and showed me life here. Then you took me in hand, Hartley, and I learned to know those boys; and from seeing what some had done, I found out what some might do. Together, under God, you guided me on. Then came the accident. Well, never mind, you know I'm a coward over that still, and I don't care to talk about it. You know something of what I went through, not all. Well, of course, my life-dreams were altered then. I used to go about day after day, and lie awake night after night, thinking of what these years might bring. But as I went along I found that God was leading me 'the right way;' all was working for good. I found it was not his will that I should be a doctor, but my will. He let me learn a great deal about it, though, and sometimes I would wonder why I had that time of training; but I see now. I have been praying and struggling for a plain way for a long time, and I think it is granted me now. Do you remember, when I was downhearted one day at first, Hartley telling me that I had a larger share of personal influence than some, and to use that aright might be my work? I think it was true, and I thank God for it; I do love these

poor people so ; the worse, the more hard and ungrateful I see a man, all the more do I feel a longing to help him. And it is something more than that, it is a real affection, and I find the people respond ; they do listen to my words and they do follow my advice in a larger measure than I could have hoped for, and I think they easily learn to love me. You understand me,—I cannot help seeing these things ; and I may tell you, for you know me too well to misconstrue, these are some of the causes that have brought me to my present decision. There is a house in S—— Street for sale ; the price certainly is exorbitant, for it is old and dirty, as you can imagine. I have passed it times out of number, and only last week for the first time did the thought strike me that it was the house for me. It is close to these homes I want to mend, and these men and women I want to help, so that they can come to me there ; but it is not so close that they will feel I am acting the spy upon their doings. You know the neighbourhood, on the very edge of your district, and I know you won't forbid. I do believe it is God's will for me that I should settle there, and move about among his lost ones, using the surgical knowledge that I have gained as a means of winning them back, and a plea for penetrating the dens and slums where the worst will congregate, so that even there I may carry some light. I shall come to you in my difficulties, but I cannot be quite under control. I like to feel I can come and

go as I like; and if I don't always follow the old beaten paths, you must be lenient. I want to fight the drink in its strongholds, and in some little way to check the tide of poverty and distress that flows from them; and as far as I can see this will be the best way. Tell me, both of you, do you think this will be right?"

Again Hartley and Mabel were silent some time, and then they answered, "We do."

"Then, Hartley, will you pray for me?" And they knelt together to seek the strength and wisdom that he would need.

Guy thanked them both and left them. He needed to be alone; for though he had long thought of this, he felt that now he was finally deciding for life. Beginnings are always endings; so Guy had much to leave and to lay aside before he could really set out in this new path. But the old childish faith of his boyhood had not grown feeble with advancing years, and with perfect confidence he was able to lay aside all doubts and hesitations, after having once felt sure that this was God's will for him.

So he took the house, and far away from the bright homes of the rich he made his little home. It was furnished simply and prettily. He wanted that there should be no show of luxury to make those amongst whom he lived envious, no costly fittings to cause them to steal. Upon one room he bestowed especial care. It was that in which he purposed to see his

poorer friends when they should visit him, and where he might hold night classes. It was large and airy, and was furnished in cottage style in the prettiest manner compatible with little expense and usefulness. He wanted those who entered it to carry away pleasant recollections of its comfort, and, at the same time, to feel it was a comfort within their reach. He wanted them to wish to imitate it in its cleanliness and simplicity; and in many cases his wish was gratified. To have a room "like Mr. Raine's" became the ambition of many a housewife; and the pennies which through his influence were saved from the public-house were spent to this end.

To many of his friends Guy was a puzzle. They called him eccentric, and laughed at his whims and ways; but he learned not to mind, and among those for whose opinion he *did* care, there was but one expressed, and that of entire approbation.

"We are fighting a deadly battle," he would say, when they told him that he was wearing himself out, "and we must be ready to feel tired sometimes. If you knew, as I do, what drink is doing, you would feel that none of us must be wanting from our post. It is only by a constant, unwearied struggle that we can ever hope to win. At present legislation is against us, public feeling is against us, and individual prejudice is against us; all we can do is to be content to battle where we can. I am now the happy possessor of three public-houses, all of which are answering

well as coffee and lodging houses ; and I hope before my death to own many more. You look at our poor from a wrong point of view, when you see them streaming in and out of the gin-palaces, and turn from them in disgust. You go to them and as good as say, 'You don't know what is right, and if you did you would not do it. I will try and teach you a little, but I am afraid you are a hopeless case.' Would any one stand that? Would you? I think not. You must go to them the other way round. You must make common cause with them. The drink is God's enemy, your enemy, their enemy ; you will fight together and drive the curse away. Then you will meet with ready response. What hinders our work most are those half-hearted people who take up the cause for a time, and then drop it again. I have known numbers, of ladies especially, gladly give up their intoxicants, and become energetic, unselfish workers ; but after two years or so the enthusiasm wears off, they begin to say, 'What is the good? their influence is so small,' and so on, and they go back to their one or two glasses a day. They are like dead weights to our cause, dragging it back. I think none should take up the cause of temperance unless from God's Word they can feel it is His cause in the present day. If once they feel that, as His servants, I do not think they could desert it after once having entered upon it."

"That fellow Raine has an odd way of putting

things," his friends would say after hearing Guy warm up upon the subject so near to his heart. "His words stick to one afterwards, and they somehow seem as though they were true."

So Guy's work was not unappreciated when here; but only Hartley knew anything really of what good he did do, or guessed in part 'the difficulties and discouragements against which he made his way; and he would often say, admiringly say, there was only one other name fit to put beside his, and that was Lionel Franklin's.

## CHAPTER XXII.

“AFTER BATTLE, VICTORY.”



HERE was always one day in the year when these fellow-workers met together, and that was Christmas day.

Mr. Raine still made it a practice to spend December and January in Errelle Square, and he liked that all his children should come to him there for the last ten days of the year. So Hartley and Mabel, with three little sunbeams, left their pleasant parsonage, feeling glad at the same time it was within so short a distance that they need not feel they were deserting their flock. Harold and Jessie travelled up from their Welsh home with four little boys; Evelyn and Bertram, only just returned from their honeymoon, came together to swell the numbers; and Guy, the life and sunshine of the party, was not wanting. Miss Raine had plenty on her 'hands such days as these; but she had a sweet young helper in Lilian, who, according to her brothers' prophecies, still remained an "old maid."

It was always a very happy season to them all,



and the talking and the laughing that they got through in those few short days was incredible. "Uncle Guy" was an immense favourite with the children; he always felt sure that they would not have cared for him so much if he had had both his arms, he said. He was almost entirely monopolized by two small Guys, who put in a plea to claim his attention specially as he was "their own particular uncle; mother had told them so, because they were named after him." So a sturdy Guy Raine, junior, and a bright, clever Guy Averne tyrannized over the not unwilling victim, and endless stories amused the young minds and fired the infantile imagination. It was his one holiday in the year, and he must make the most of it, he always said.

These ten days were always distinguished by two events of special importance, to which all learned to look forward. One was on Christmas afternoon, at three o'clock; the other on New Year's eve. Uncle Guy and the little nephews, Hartley, and Mabel, and Harold generally went to the former, and the one who asked them to go was Lionel Franklin. In memory of the Christmas dinner of long ago, he and Will never failed to supply one to some of the poorest and most needy of their boy-friends, and they learned to look to those who had provided the first in St. Ann's Court to come in and see them enjoy their meal. Some of the old cubs came too, so that it was a pleasant meeting-time. Oyster was hardly

recognizable, dressed as manager of one of Guy's coffee public-houses; Plover, in the uniform of a letter-carrier, looked very different to the rough-headed boy of days gone by; and many of them, by their steadiness and honesty, had won for themselves places of which there was no need to be ashamed. Many were scattered afar—some in the army, some in the navy, some in the merchant service, others in country situations; but whenever business or pleasure called them to London they never failed to find out Lionel, and, with the old loyal feeling, to report all their doings since last they met; and they were always warmly welcomed. Another friend yet was invariably a witnesser of these festivities, and that was Policeman B. He had always remained a firm friend to Lionel, and he gladly consented to say a few words to the boys amongst the short speeches which were always delivered after the meal was fairly over.

Lionel would always tell them of the first Christmas dinner, and would repeat them Sparrow's brave little speech, and tell them how he felt he and they needed it now, as he and his other friends had needed it then. "I often think of it," he would say, "and never, never may I forget it. It seems, when these days come round, as though I again heard his voice, and had my boy-friend back again; but I must wait now till I go to him; and while we are struggling together in seeking to serve the loving Master and

uphold the cause of Him whom he so faithfully followed, we too may each one know that his 'sins are forgiven for His name's sake.'"

Then Guy would stand up and tell the boys how it was Lionel and Sparrow's example that had first led him to think of things as he now thought, and had given him the hatred of the drink he now had. If they looked into the scarlet pledge-book, they would see their three names all standing together; and he had never been sorry that he had done so, and he hoped a great many would follow their example. He wanted them, if they lived, to have happy, joyous lives like he and Lionel had; he wanted, if they died, to have peaceful, hopeful deaths like little Sparrow's. God had given both to them; he was willing to give both to all.

And then others followed: they always found nothing helped the boys so much as hearing how others, situated as they were and hindered as they were, had manfully chosen the right and kept to it; nothing made them so ready to do as hearing what had been done. It was always a very pleasant part of Christmas day, and all concerned learned to look forward to its recurrence year after year.

Then the second family event was afternoon tea at Guy's house on New Year's eve. Every member of the family went to that, from grandpapa down to the very tiniest baby—Guy would let nobody off. He could not ask his lady friends to come and stay with

him, he said, on account of the unpleasant neighbourhood, so all he claimed was this visit once a year. And nobody grudged the afternoon thus spent. Those who had never seen it were surprised and delighted that in such a locality he could keep up such a charmingly bright and cheery little establishment, and those who had seen it were always anxious to go again. It was the only day it ever looked like home, and Guy always felt the contrast between the little house as it looked when brightened by loving faces and resounding with happy voices, and its usual emptiness. They would tease him about his bachelor ways, or pity his lonely life, but he would disclaim all need of sympathy, and dare any of them to prove himself happier than he. Other friends would say he was not fit to live alone in his crippled condition, and would advise him to get a wife; but he would look at his empty sleeve and wonder who would have him. But Mabel was the only one who knew why Guy never married. And he never deserted his self-chosen post; all the weariness, all the disappointment of it, and the tired, restless feeling that would come from his crippled condition, he told only to God. To his friends, richer and poorer, he was always the same strong bright character, and the love they gave him, and the good he was enabled to do them, repaid him sometimes for all it cost him to do it.

So each in his or her own sphere worked on, and as they learned from others what lay in their power

to do, so those who came after learned the same lesson from them; and as one by one they were called to lay down their arms and leave the battle-field of life, they could feel that, if they had done nothing more, they had shown by what they had done what others might do.

